Story by Kyo Shirodaira Art by Eita Mizuno

11

Spiral

THE BONDS OF REASONING

Spiral THE BONDS OF REASONING 11

STORY/KYO SHIRODAIRA
ART/EITA MIZUNO

What more

In the name

OF SPIRAL...

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CHAPTER FIFTY-ONE
REACH FOR TOMORROW
APPLE

Spiral

THE BONDS OF REASONING

GAA (WHIRR)
SIGH. HOSPITAL.

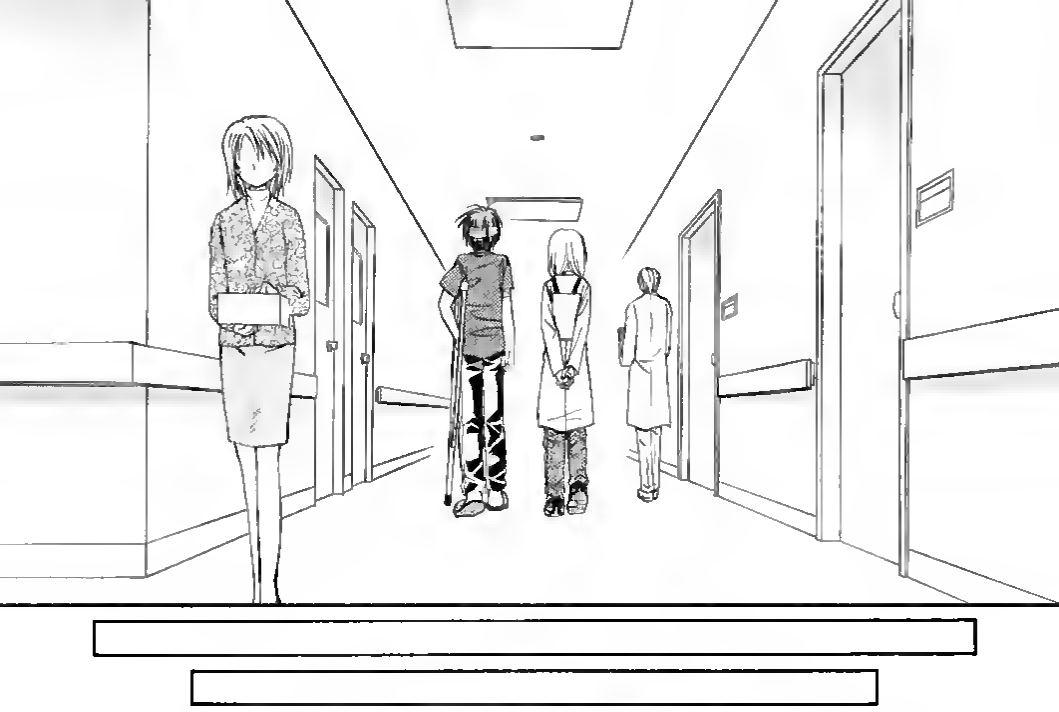
SIGN: NURSES' STATION
ナースステーション
KA CLACK
GOD AND THE DEVIL ACT AS TWO SIDES TO ONE COIN.
AS THE LITTLE BROTHER TO GOD...
...JUST WHAT LIES AHEAD...?
UWAH! NARUMI-SAN!!

YOU WERE ADMITTED HERE JUST YESTERDAY...
..AND YOU'RE ALREADY WALKING AROUND?!
IT'S NOT AS BAD AS IT LOOKS.
A FEW STITCHES AND A TRANSFUSION. AND I'M RIGHT AS RAIN
YOU LOST SO MUCH BLOOD. I HEARD IT WAS A REALLY CLOSE CALL FOR YOU.
ANYWAY, WHAT ABOUT YOU?
I KNEW SHE WAS IMMORTAL ...
I EVEN GOT TO GO HOME YESTERDAY.
SO, YUP! ♪

I'M CURIOUS WHAT THE POLICE ARE DOING...
...AND HOW RUTHER-FORD'S FARING NOW.
MY SISTER'S ROOM.
I HEARD WATAYA CAME TO REPORT.
SO...
...WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
...
PLUS
...
...I HAVE TO TIE UP SOME LOOSE ENDS IF I'M GOING TO BE READY FOR WHAT'S COMING NEXT.

RIO-SAN, RYOUKO-SAN, AND ASAZUKI-SAN ARE CONSCIOUS, BUT HAD SEVERAL BROKEN BONES AND WERE PRESCRIBED COMPLETE BED REST.
KANON-SAN WAS TAKEN TO POLICE HEAD-QUARTERS, BUT I HAVEN'T SECURED ANY INFORMATION ON HIM YET.
...HMMM.
RUTHERFORD-SAN'S BEEN UNCONSCIOUS SINCE HE WAS ADMITTED TO THE HOSPITAL.
HOW ABOUT THAT WATCHER KIRIE TSUCHIYA I MET DURING THE CHAOS? WHAT'S SHE UP TO?
SIGN. NURSES' STATION
SHE STARTED THE PAPERWORK FOR EVERYONE'S HOSPITAL ADMITTANCE ...
...AND STAYED ON THE PHONE THE WHOLE TIME WITH A REAL STERN LOOK ON HER FACE.
SHE SEEMED REALLY IRRITATED.
ALSO, YESTERDAY'S FIASCO GOT ALMOST NO MEDIA COVERAGE, SO THERE'S NOT MUCH OF A STIR...
...THOUGH SCHOOL'S GOING ON BREAK FOR A WHILE.
...IT FEELS LIKE...
...EVERYONE'S BEING CORNERED BY GOD AND THE DEVIL.

...DOES IT MAKE YOU WANT TO GIVE UP?
DON'T BE STUPID.
IF I DID THAT, A CERTAIN PIG-TAILED GIRL WOULD BASH MY HEAD IN.
CUT ME SOME SLACK.
SERIOUSLY.
YEAH.
YOU SAID IT...
HA HA ...
THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU KEEP A TROUBLESOME GIRL LIKE THAT AROUND.



SIGN: MADOKA NARUMI
521
鳴海 まどか
GACHA GAUCH
SIS...
...WE'RE COMING IN.
Y-
YOU'RE WALKING AROUND? IN YOUR CONDITION!?
YOU HAVE TO STAY IN BED!

THEY SAID I'LL HAVE TO STAY IN THE HOSPITAL FOR AT LEAST A MONTH.
OH WELL... AFTER ALL THOSE DIRECT HITS...
...IT'S ONLY TO BE EXPECTED.
INACTIVITY CAN BE JUST AS BAD FOR THE BODY.
HOW ARE YOU DOING, SIS?
...IS YOUR SHOULDER ...
...OKAY?
YOU GOT SHOT TOO.
IT'S THE SAME THING.
YOUR STRATEGY WAS SPOT-ON, HUH?
I MEAN, I WAS PRETTY SHOCKED WHEN YOU SHOT ME, BUT...
...IT REALLY THREW THAT KANON BOY FOR A LOOP, DON'T YOU THINK?

HIS SISTER ISN'T VERY BRIGHT
?
DID YOU FORESEE THAT TOO?
MORE IMPORTANTLY, HOW IS THE POLICE INVESTIGATION GOING?
THOSE SO-CALLED "WATCHERS" SHOWED UP AND HAVE SUPPRESSED THE DEPARTMENT AT EVEN THE HIGHEST LEVELS.
SAME FOR KEEPING THE MEDIA OFF OF THIS.
IT ALMOST MAKES ME WONDER IF THEY DIDN'T ANTICIPATE EVERYTHING THAT'S HAPPENED.
THERE'S NOTHING LEFT TO HIDE AT THIS POINT, RIGHT?
IT FEELS LIKE THEY'RE NOT EVEN GOING TO INVESTIGATE, LIKE THEY JUST INTEND TO SWEEP THE WHOLE THING UNDER THE RUG.

FOR NOW THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO FOR HIM.
THEY'RE SAYING THAT WITH ALL THE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL EXHAUSTION, HE PROBABLY WON'T WAKE UP FOR ANOTHER TWO OR THREE DAYS.
HE WAS BROUGHT TO THE POLICE INFIRMARY AND IS STILL UNCONSCIOUS.
AND KANON HILBERT?
EVEN THOUGH THIS WHOLE THING'S FINALLY WRAPPED UP...
...WE STILL DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THE TRUTH.
...STILL, NEITHER RUTHERFORD NOR THAT KIRIE TSUCHIYA GIRL...
...WILL TRY TO HIDE ANYTHING FROM US ANYMORE.

WE'LL FINALLY KNOW THE TRUTH, NO MATTER HOW UGLY IT IS.
THE TRUTH ABOUT WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON BEHIND THE SCENES...
...AND WHAT MY BROTHER'S PLOTTING.
...AND I TAKE IT YOU DON'T INTEND TO HIDE ANYTHING FROM ME EITHER?
HOW YOU'RE AFFILIATED WITH THE BLADE CHILDREN...
...WHAT YOU'VE SEEN...
...AND WHAT YOU KNOW?
YEAH.

AS INPATIENTS, WE'VE BOTH GOT A LOT OF TIME ON OUR HANDS.
TAKE ALL THE TIME YOU NEED.
BUT IT'S A LONG STORY.
IS NOW GOOD FOR YOU?
...GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT.
IN THAT CASE...
...I'LL START FROM THE TIME I FIRST MET EYES RUTHERFORD ...

BOX: TERIA
AND HERE WE ARE NOW.
...AND THEN YESTERDAY BROUGHT IT TO AN END.
I'M SORRY THAT YOU ENDED UP IN THE HOSPITAL BECAUSE OF ME...
I THOUGHT IT'D BE TOO MUCH FOR YOU TO HANDLE, SO I DIDN'T WANT TO TELL YOU UP TILL NOW.

I'M REALLY SORRY.
HOLD IT...!
YOU'RE IN WAY MORE DANGER THAN I AM!
YOU'VE ALMOST BEEN KILLED AT LEAST FIVE OR SIX TIMES! OR DID YOU FORGET!?
IF IT WASN'T FOR ME, HE'D NO DOUBT BE DEAD BY NOW.
SHE'S RIGHT.
MM-HMM. MM-HMM.

BOSU (WHAP)
むっ MU (GRR)
NO ...
IT'S ALSO THANKS TO YOU THAT I'VE ALMOST BEEN KILLED SO MANY TIMES.
...IN MY CASE, I ASKED FOR IT.
IF I'D ONLY BEEN THINKING A LITTLE MORE CLEARLY...
...YOU WOULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN HURT LIKE THIS.
...THAT'S ENOUGH OF THAT.

YOU DIDN'T DO ANYTHING WRONG.
THE REAL ONE AT FAULT HERE IS KIYOTAKA-SAN.
.....
...I'VE BEEN WONDERING SINCE YESTERDAY...
...WHY KIYOTAKA-SAN MARRIED ME...
...AND WHY HE DISAPPEARED SO SOON AFTER.
IT'S SO OBVIOUS THAT HE HAD PLANNED HIS DISAPPEAR-ANCE LONG BEFORE.

WHY DID HE LEAVE ME?
AND YET, WHY DID HE MARRY ME?
...I'M JUST A SIMPLE TOOL.
NOTHING MORE THAN A CHAIN TO KEEP YOU FROM STRAYING TOO FAR FROM THE HEART OF THIS MYSTERY.

KIYOTAKA-SAN NEEDED TO HIDE HIMSELF SO THAT HE COULD OPERATE MORE FREELY...
...BUT IN DOING SO, YOU, WHO'D BEEN LIVING WITH HIM, WOULD BE LEFT BEHIND.
BEING IN JUNIOR HIGH, YOU'D HAVE TO RETURN TO YOUR PARENTS' HOUSE...
...THEREBY LEAVING TSUKIOMI HIGH WHERE THE BLADE CHILDREN WERE GATHERED AND LOSING THE ONE ATTACHMENT LINKING YOU TO THE INCIDENTS TO COME.
THAT'S WHY HE NEEDED A CHAIN TO BIND YOU HERE.
SO KIYOTAKA-SAN MARRIED ME.
YOU MOVED BACK IN WITH YOUR PARENTS FOR A TIME, BUT...
...AFTER KIYOTAKA-SAN DISAPPEARED, I WAS A MESS AND COULDN'T BE LEFT ALONE, SO YOU CAME BACK.
KIYOTAKA-SAN WAS COUNTING ON YOUR GOOD NATURE.

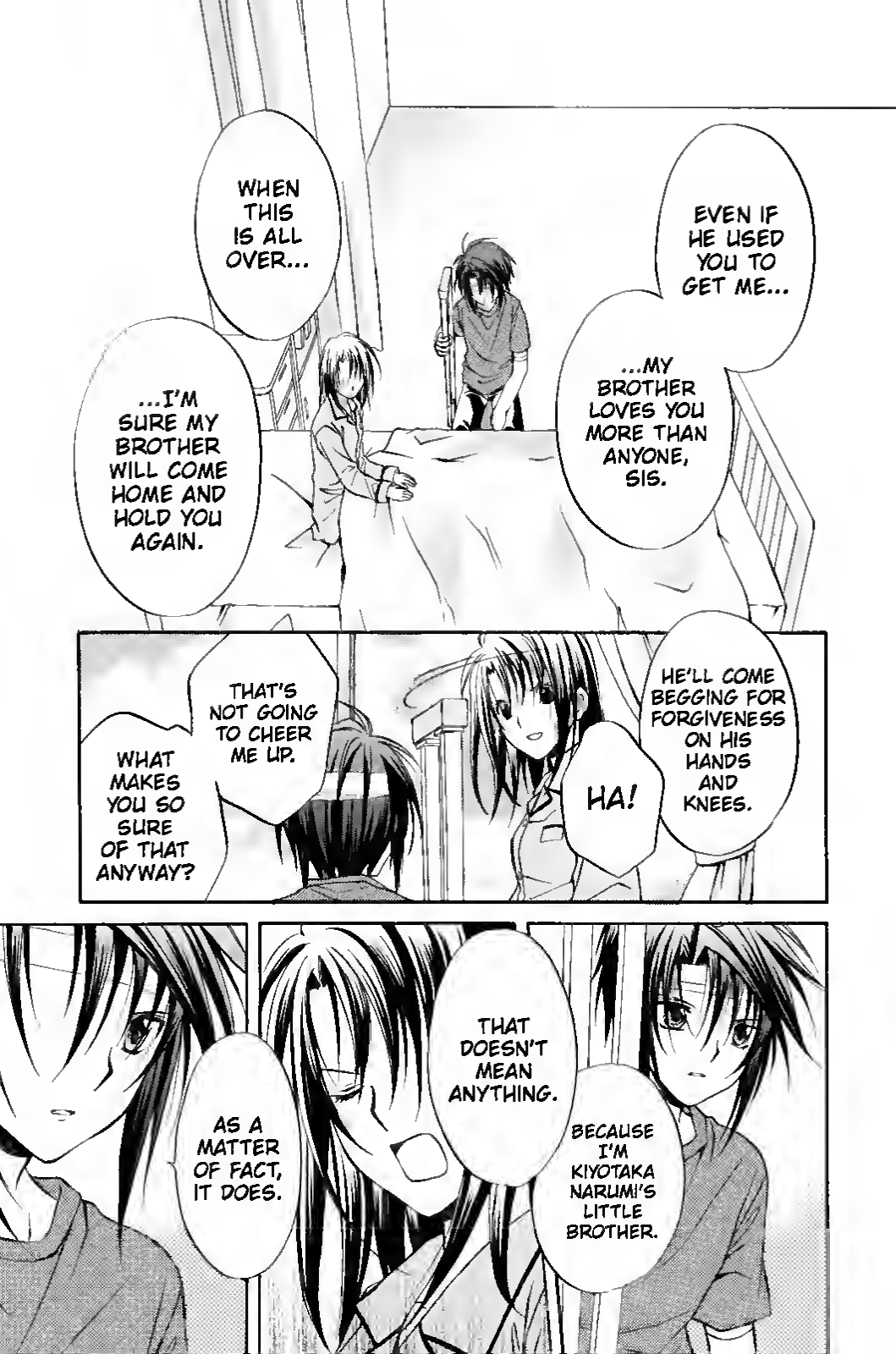
THE FACT THAT OUR APARTMENT WAS SO NEAR THE SCHOOL WASN'T AN ACCIDENT, EITHER.
HE KNEW YOU'D CHOOSE THE CLOSEST SCHOOL FOR THE EASIEST COMMUTE.
HE SET UP ALL OF IT TO LOOK LIKE A COINCIDENCE ...
...BUT IN ACTUALITY, EVERYTHING WAS ARRANGED TO PUT YOU ON THE FRONT LINES OF THE CONFLICT.
I WAS THE PERSON BEST SUITED TO BE THAT CHAIN.
BEING A DETECTIVE WAS A VERSATILE POSITION IN TERMS OF INFORMATION AND MOBILITY.
AND I WAS COMPLETELY PLIANT TO KIYOTAKA-SAN.
I MAY SEEM FIERCE, BUT I'M ALSO FRAGILE.
...OH WELL.
EVEN IF I HADN'T BEEN AROUND, HE'D HAVE MARRIED SOMEONE JUST AS SUITABLE.

I WISH KIYOTAKA-SAN HAD MARRIED SOMEONE ELSE.
I SURE GOT TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF.
I SWEAR ...
HA! HA!
HA...
PAFU (PAT)
...I HAD A SLIGHT SUSPICION ALL ALONG.

I JUST WANTED TO TRUST KIYOTAKA-SAN...
BUT ...
...I DIDN'T WANT TO ADMIT IT.
BOX: TERIA
...GIVE US A MINUTE ALONE?
WOULD YOU...
テリア

PATAN (SHUT)
... SURE.
GOOD LUCK.

SIS, YOUR SUSPICIONS ...
...MIGHT ALL BE ON THE MARK.
BUT THERE'S ONE THING YOU GOT WRONG.


EVEN IF HE USED YOU TO GET ME...
...MY BROTHER LOVES YOU MORE THAN ANYONE, SIS.
WHEN THIS IS ALL OVER...
...I'M SURE MY BROTHER WILL COME HOME AND HOLD YOU AGAIN.
HE'LL COME BEGGING FOR FORGIVENESS ON HIS HANDS AND KNEES.
HA!
THAT'S NOT GOING TO CHEER ME UP.
WHAT MAKES YOU SO SURE OF THAT ANYWAY?
THAT DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHING.
BECAUSE I'M KIYOTAKA NARUMI'S LITTLE BROTHER.
AS A MATTER OF FACT, IT DOES.

MY BROTHER AND I ARE BASICALLY IDENTICAL, RIGHT?
...COME AGAIN?
.....
...SURE, IT CAN BE SHOCKING HOW ALIKE YOU ARE AT TIMES, BUT STILL ...
YOU KNOW IT, SIS.
IT'S ALMOST CRUEL HOW SIMILAR WE ARE.

MY BROTHER AND I ARE PRACTICALLY THE SAME PERSON.
NOT JUST IN HOW WE LOOK, BUT ON THE INSIDE TOO.
WE NEVER TRIED TO BE THE SAME, AND YET, FOR AS FAR BACK AS I CAN REMEMBER, HE AND I FELL INTO THE SAME PATTERNS.
LIKE WITH PLAYING THE PIANO.
OR OUR FAVORITE FOODS OR TASTES IN MUSIC.
I REPLICATED MY BROTHER IN EVERYTHING.
WHAT MY BROTHER LIKED WAS WHAT I LIKED.
WHAT MY BROTHER HATED BECAME WHAT I HATED TOO.
SO? WHAT ARE YOU GETTING AT?
SO IT WORKS THE OTHER WAY AROUND TOO.
WHAT I LIKED WAS WHAT MY BROTHER LIKED.
WHOMEVER I LOVED, MY BROTHER LOVED TOO.

SIS, I LOVE YOU MORE THAN ANYBODY.
I LOVE YOU AS A WOMAN. NOTHING MORE, NOTHING LESS.
I KNOW MY BROTHER DOES TOO, JUST AS MUCH.

S-
STOP IT, AYUMU!
I KNOW YOU'RE TRYING TO CHEER ME UP, BUT JOKING AROUND LIKE THAT'S GOING TOO FAR...
IT'S NOT A JOKE.
MY FIRST CRUSH...
...WAS YOU, MADOKA-SAN.

AND I FEEL THE SAME WAY NOW.
.....
... UMM ...
SERIOUSLY ...?
SERIOUSLY.
KAAA (BLUSH)

Y-YOU!
IF YOU'RE GOING TO SAY ALL THAT...
...THEN WHERE'RE THE BLUSHING CHEEKS!?
WHERE'S THE FLUSTERED EMBARRASSMENT!?
THERE'S AN ATTITUDE YOU HAVE TO TAKE WITH THESE THINGS, YOU KNOW!!
OTAKU
WHY AM I THE ONE TURNING RED!?
HEH...
...I'VE ALWAYS FELT FOR YOU, MADOKA-SAN.
THAT'S WHY IT WAS SO HARD WHEN YOU MARRIED MY BROTHER.
I DIDN'T WANT TO SEE YOU TWO TOGETHER, SO I RAN AWAY TO MY PARENTS.

WHEN MY BROTHER DISAPPEARED ...
...I WAS SO WORRIED ABOUT YOU, I HAD TO COME BACK.
I WANTED TO BE WITH YOU HOWEVER I COULD, SO I STAYED WITH YOU.
IT STILL FRUSTRATED ME THAT YOU ONLY HAD EYES FOR MY BROTHER...
...BUT I ENJOYED GETTING TO LIVE TOGETHER.
IT MAY NOT HAVE BEEN MUCH, AND MAYBE IT WAS WRONG OF ME...
...AND EVEN THOUGH I KNEW IT WOULD NEVER AMOUNT TO ANYTHING...
...THAT HAPPINESS FELT LIKE AN ANSWERED PRAYER.

MY FEELINGS ARE NO LIE.
I'VE ALWAYS LOVED YOU, MADOKA-SAN.

.....
UH...
AH...
EVEN IF YOU SUDDENLY CONFESS THESE FEELINGS ...
THINK ABOUT IT!
...I'M A MARRIED WOMAN.
AND WE'RE TECH-NICALLY BROTHER AND SISER!!
UMM...
PLUS, DON'T FORGET!
IF I WERE TO MAKE A MOVE ON YOU AT MY AGE, IT'D BE A CRIME!
YEAH!
A CRIME!
AND CRIMES ARE NO-NOS!
SO I APPRECIATE YOUR FEELINGS, BUT I CAN'T RETURN THEM!!
KIYOTAKA-SAN'S THE LOVE OF MY LIFE, AND THAT'S FINAL!
GOT IT!?
I KNOW.
IT'S NO GOOD HAVING YOU SAY YOU RETURN MY FEELINGS NOW.

BOFU (POOMF)
I'M STILL PLENTY YOUNG!!
FOR STARTERS, BY THE TIME I'M OF MARRYING AGE, YOU'LL BE AN OLD HAG.
PON (PAT)
GI (CREAK)
PON
.....
GATA (CLATTER)

I KNOW I CAN'T TAKE YOU AWAY FROM MY BROTHER.
I'M NOT THE ONE FOR YOU...
...AND CONFESSING ALL THIS TO YOU WAS UNFAIR.
BUT IF I HAD NEVER SAID ANYTHING, IT'D TEAR AT ME FOREVER.
AND I'M PRETTY SURE I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO CHANGE THE WAY I FEEL.

...I THOUGHT MAYBE I COULD FINALLY PUT THESE FEELINGS BEHIND ME.
...TO BE HONEST, I THOUGHT I'D HAVE TO HOLD IT IN FOR MY WHOLE LIFE...
BUT ...
...WHEN I SHOT THE MOST IMPORTANT PERSON TO ME WITH MY OWN HANDS IN ORDER TO STOP KANON HILBERT...
SURPRISINGLY ENOUGH...
...I'M FINE WITH LETTING THESE FEELINGS GO.

I THINK DESTINY...
...HAS A NIGHTMARE IN STORE FOR ME.
I MIGHT HAVE TO FACE DEVASTATION LIKE I'VE NEVER IMAGINED.
...MADOKA-SAN, YOU MIGHT BE FACING DIFFICULT TIMES AHEAD TOO.
...SO I WANT TO GET THESE FEELINGS OFF MY CHEST. THEY'VE HELD MY HEAD DOWN LONG ENOUGH.
...WITHOUT HAVING ANY REGRETS...
WHEN IT COMES, I WANT TO BE ABLE TO HOLD MY HEAD UP...

BUT I'M NOT WRONG WHEN I SAY MY BROTHER LOVES YOU.
IF HE DIDN'T, THERE'S NO WAY ...
...I WOULD LET HIM HAVE YOU.
KATA (CLACK)
I'M SORRY FOR GIVING YOU MORE TO WORRY ABOUT AT A TIME LIKE THIS.
BUT AT LEAST NOW...
...I CAN FINALLY FACE TOMORROW.

...AND GOOD-BYE.

WAIT, AYUMU!!
W-
SU (STEP)
I'M SORRY, OKAY?
...I MEAN ...

STAY STRONG.
WHAT ARE YOU APOLOGIZING FOR?
PATAN (SHUT)
WELL, I'LL SEE YOU LATER...
...
SIS.
.....
KAA (BLUSH)

.....
MAYBE MY FEELINGS AREN'T COMPLETELY SEVERED YET...
MY CHEST STILL ACHES ...
...I SHOULD BE ABLE TO MOVE FORWARD NOW...
GU (GRIP)
REGARD-LESS...

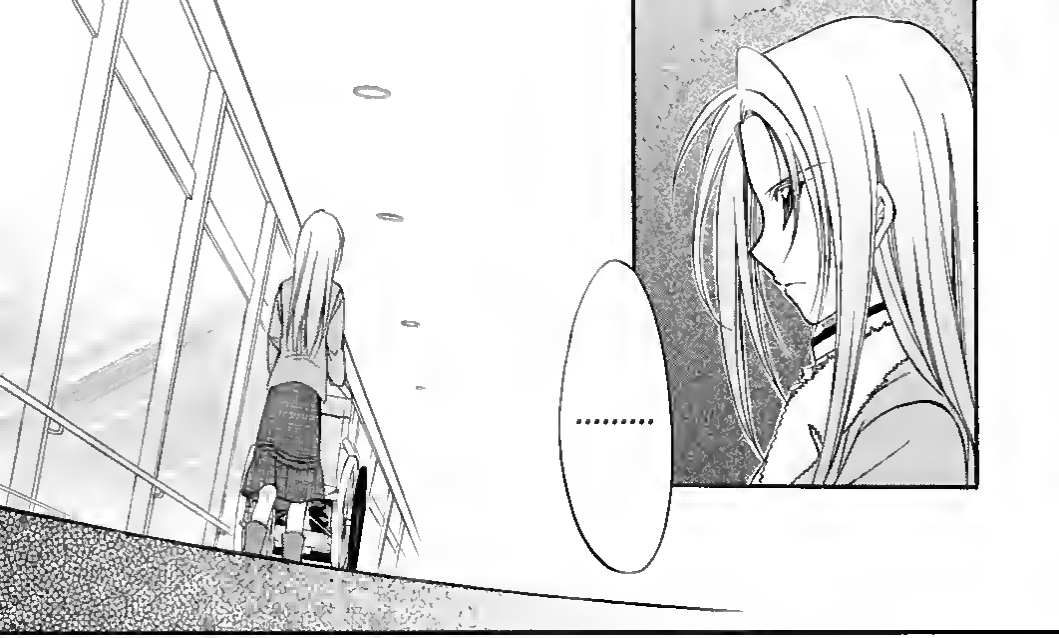
...I'VE RAISED MY HEAD...
OKAY, BROTHER ...
I DON'T CARE WHAT DESPAIR AWAITS ME.
GIVE ME EVERY-THING YOU'VE GOT!

CHAPTER FIFTY-TWO
THE IMMORTALITY OPTION

SIGN: MIYASHITA GENERAL HOSPITAL
...RUTH-KUN.
YOU KNOW WHAT HIZUMI IS LIKE...
ARE YOU STILL GOING TO PLACE YOUR BETS ON AYUMU-KUN?
...IS THERE ANY OTHER CHOICE?

...IF I COULD GIVE UP...
...I WOULDN'T BE THE PERSON I AM TODAY.
TON (TAP)
トン
...IF YOU WOULD JUST GIVE UP ON HAVING A FUTURE ...
...IT WOULD MAKE LIFE A LITTLE EASIER FOR YOU.
I'M GOING TO TELL AYUMU NARUMI THE WHOLE TRUTH.
NO COMPLAINTS, I TAKE IT?

THERE'S NO NEED TO HIDE IT ANYMORE.
THERE'S NO TRYING TO ESCAPE THE GOD-HAND OF KIYOTAKA NARUMI.
...ONLY IN GOD'S LITTLE BROTHER ...
...IS THERE A CHANCE OF OUTMANEU-VERING THAT HAND, DON'T YOU AGREE?
.....
THAT'S EXACTLY WHY...


.....

NEWSPAPER: A NEW RELIGION ON THE RISE!?
THIS...
THIS IS SO AWKWARD ...!!

IT'S ALWAYS BEEN HARD TO TELL WHAT HE'S THINKING, BUT...
ARE YOU STILL THINKING ABOUT WHAT I SAID?
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO ACT OR WHAT TO SAY TO HIM!
OH NO! I'M OVER-THINKING THIS!
YOU COULD JUST ACT LIKE YOU ALWAYS DO, YOU KNOW?
PURU PURU (TREMBLE)
UWAAAH! HE SAID THAT I WAS HIS FIRST CRUSH, AND THAT HE LIKED ME, AND THAT'S WHY HE CAME BACK FROM HIS PARENTS' HOUSE, AND THAT HE'S HAPPY HE LIVED WITH ME, AND THAT HE LOVED ME THAT WHOLE TIME.

NEWSPAPER: ASAYO NEWSPAPER

I CAN'T DO THAT!!
I'M NOT PROUD OF IT, BUT I'VE NEVER HAD SOMEONE CONFESS THEIR FEELINGS TO ME POINT-BLANK LIKE THAT BEFORE!!
NOT EVEN KIYOTAKA-SAN SAID ANYTHING LIKE THAT TO ME!
SO MAYBE I'M A LITTLE HAPPY!
IT'S NOT LIKE I CAN ACT LIKE IT NEVER HAPPENED!!
WELL, I CAN.
AFTER ALL, NO MATTER HOW I FEEL ABOUT YOU, THERE'S NO USE IN YOU TRYING TO ACT COOL AT THIS POINT.
KATA (CLACK)
I VIVIDLY RECALL A CERTAIN PATHETIC SISTER WHO WOULDN'T EAT OR SHOWER, LET ALONE GO TO THE BATHROOM, WHEN MY BROTHER DISAPPEARED.
THAT'S THE LOWEST A WOMAN CAN FALL.
UGH ...

SU (SSK)
...REGARDLESS, MY FEELINGS HAVEN'T CHANGED.
I STILL CARE DEEPLY ABOUT YOU AS MY SISTER.
SO BE LIKE YOU ALWAYS HAVE BEEN.
THAT'S THE SISTER I LOVE BEST.
EYES RUTHERFORD SAID HE'S COMING TO SORT OUT ALL THE RIDDLES WE'VE ENCOUNTERED SO FAR.
ISN'T IT ODD THAT SHE'S NOT AROUND?
...BY THE WAY, WHAT ABOUT THAT PIGTAILED GIRL?
PAKU (CHOMP)
.....

IT'D BE ODDER FOR HER TO BE HERE, DON'T YOU THINK?
SHE WASN'T DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THIS FROM THE START.
IF SHE LEARNS TOO MUCH, SHE MIGHT NEVER BE ABLE TO DISASSOCIATE HERSELF FROM THIS WHOLE BUSINESS EVEN IF SHE TRIED.
THAT'S WHY...
...IT'S BETTER THAT SHE NOT KNOW.
...THAT'S AWFULLY CONSIDERATE OF YOU.
BUT THAT GIRL...
...MUST BE INTERESTED IN YOU, YOU KNOW?
SHE'S A GOOD, RELIABLE GIRL.
WHY NOT GO OUT WITH HER?
.....

WHY?
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE.
キッパリ
KIPPARI (BLUNT)
SHE'S NOT MY TYPE IN THE LEAST.
...PRETTY CRUEL...
...THIS KID'S...
KI (SQUEAK)
!
ガチャ!
GACHA (CLACK)

EXCUSE US.
PATAN (SHUT)
HE SAYS HE'S FINALLY READY TO UNVEIL THE TRUTH TO YOU, SO...
...I'VE TAKEN IT UPON MYSELF TO ACCOMPANY HIM.
AFTER ALL, I'M BETTER-INFORMED ABOUT THIS THAN RUTH-KUN ...
AND SINCE I'M THE LAST PERSON TO HAVE CONTACT WITH KIYOTAKA NARUMI, I'M SURE YOU WANT TO HEAR WHAT I HAVE TO SAY, NO?

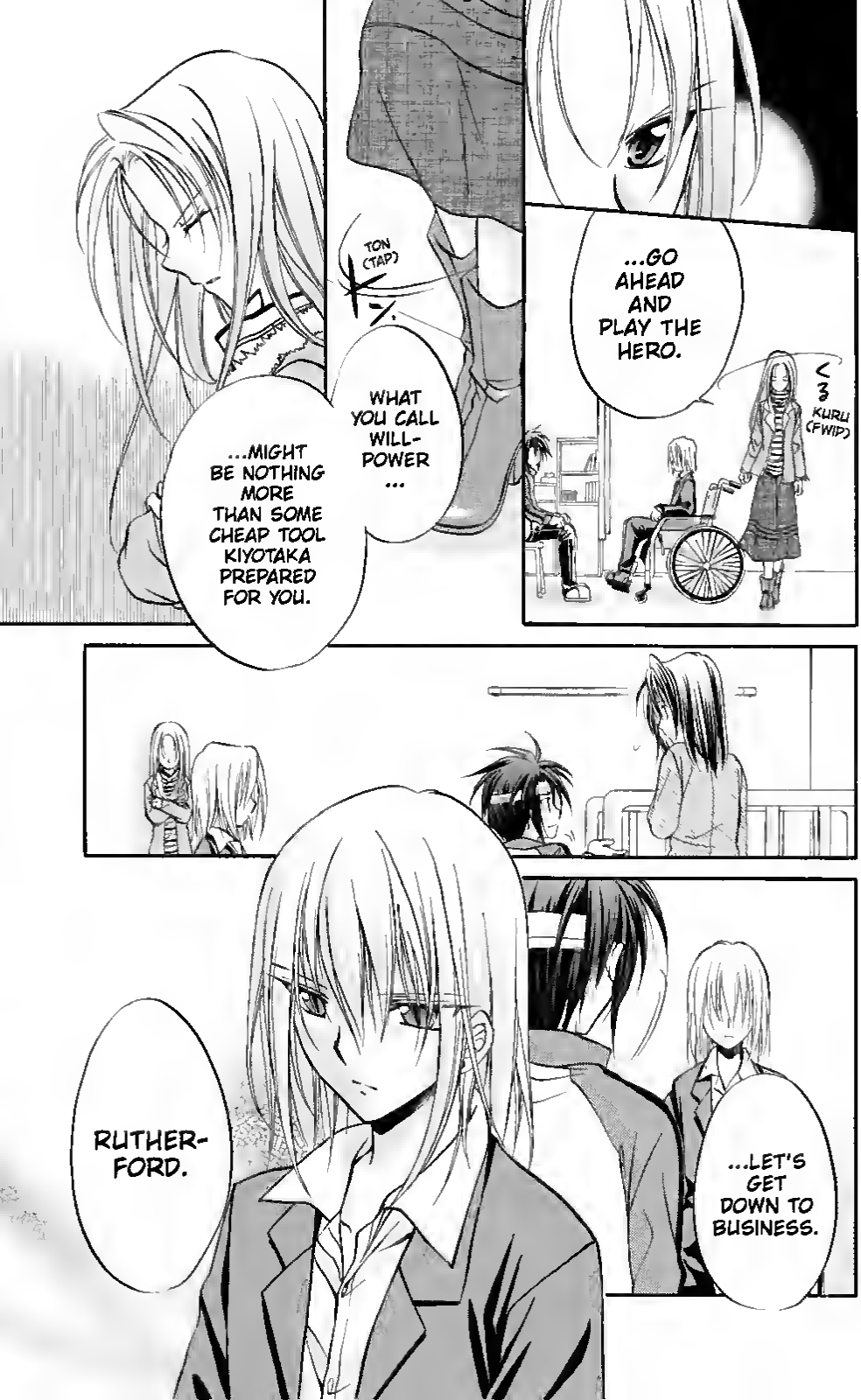
AS LONG AS WE HEAR THE TRUTH, I DON'T CARE WHO TALKS.
I'M NOT ABOUT TO SHUT MY EARS TO THIS.
...HMM.
YOUR RESOLVE HAS GROWN STRONG IN SUCH A SHORT TIME.
DOES THAT MEAN YOU FINALLY CLEARED THE AIR ABOUT YOUR FIRST LOVE BEING MADOKA-SAN?
H-
HOW DO YOU KNOW WHO AYUMU'S FIRST CRUSH WAS!?
WE KNOW EVERYONE WITH CONNECTIONS TO AYUMU NARUMI.
KIYOTAKA MADE SURE TO SPREAD THE WORD.
EH?

FIRST THINGS FIRST. DON'T GO THINKING YOU'RE A BIG SHOT JUST BECAUSE YOU MANAGED TO STOP KANON-KUN.
!?
!?
YOU CAN'T CHANGE ANYTHING.
THIS WILL END JUST AS KIYOTAKA'S PLANNED.
YOUR RESIS-TANCE ...
...ONLY PROLONGS YOUR SUFFERING.

...
YEAH.
THAT MIGHT BE.
BUT WHAT IF I GAVE UP NOW ...
...AND AFTER IT WAS ALL OVER...
.....
...MY BROTHER SAID, "IF ONLY YOU HADN'T GIVEN UP, YOU COULD HAVE CHANGED FATE"?
THAT'S HOW IT WAS WITH KANON HILBERT.

I WAS WEAK FROM THE START.
I DIDN'T EVEN TRY TO THINK OF WHAT OPTIONS I HAD.
I DIDN'T TRY ANYTHING.
IF I'D THOUGHT THINGS OUT FROM THE START...
...I MIGHT HAVE REDUCED THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE HURT.
...I MIGHT HAVE AVOIDED PUTTING MY SISTER IN THIS STATE.
...MAYBE IT WOULD HAVE TURNED OUT THE SAME WAY.
MAYBE I'M IN STORE FOR ANOTHER ROUND OF PAIN.
BUT IF MY ALTERNATIVE IS TO DO NOTHING ...
...ONLY TO REALIZE AFTER THE FACT THAT THERE WAS HOPE...
...I'D RATHER FIGHT BACK, EVEN IF IT'S FUTILE.

BESIDES, I'M USED TO LOSING.
SO I'M GOING TO DO WHAT I CAN, EVEN IF I ULTIMATELY FAIL.
EVEN IF I LOSE IN THE END, AT LEAST I CAN SAY I TRIED.
.....
HEH.
I'M NOT BACKING DOWN.
AND EVEN IF I FALL...
...I'LL RISE AGAIN BY THE STRENGTH OF MY OWN WILLPOWER.

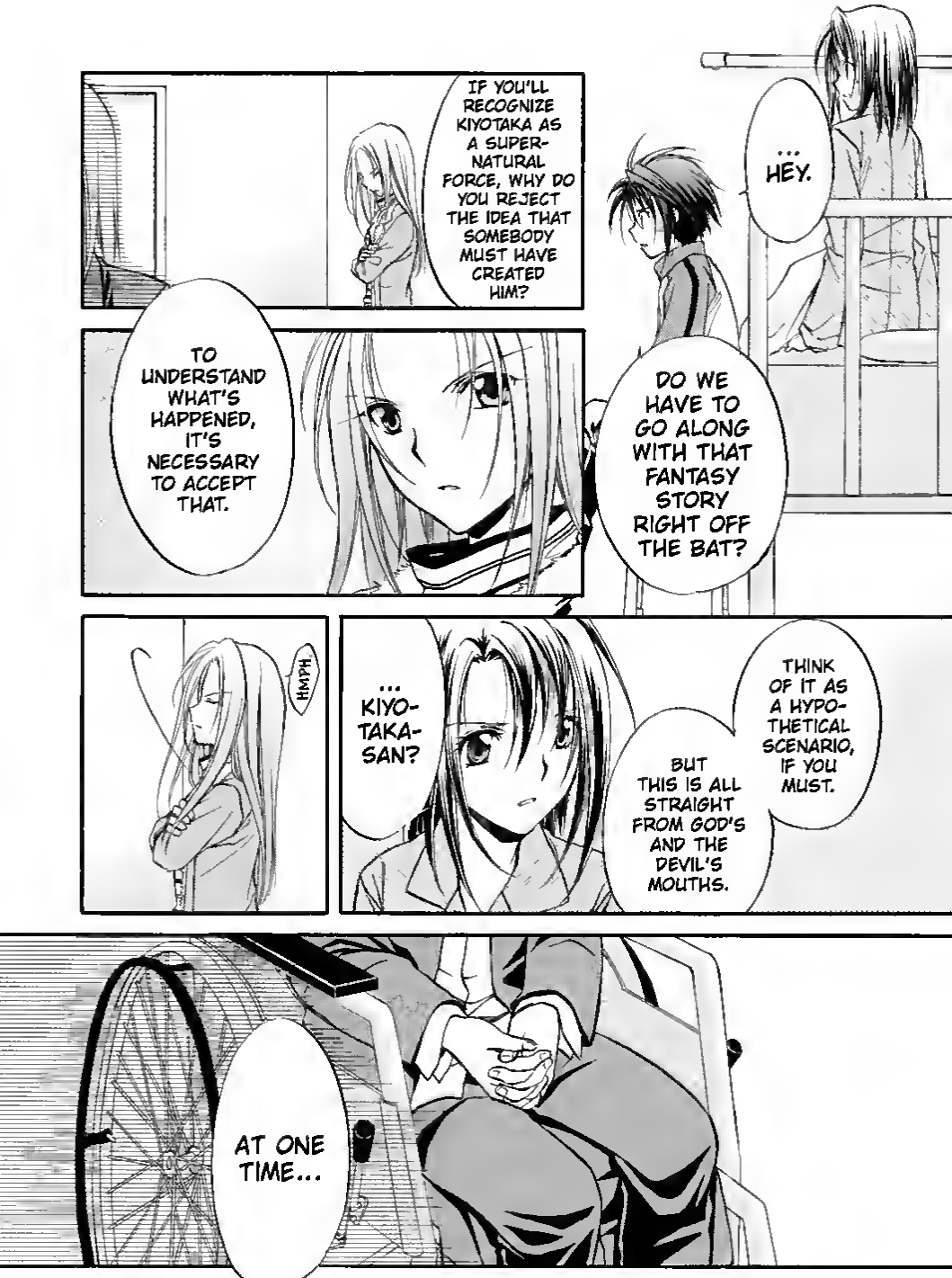

...GO AHEAD AND PLAY THE HERO.
KURU (FWIP)
TON (TAP)
WHAT YOU CALL WILL-POWER ...
...MIGHT BE NOTHING MORE THAN SOME CHEAP TOOL KIYOTAKA PREPARED FOR YOU.
...LET'S GET DOWN TO BUSINESS.
RUTHER-FORD.

NOW THAT WE'RE FINALLY GETTING INTO IT, I'M NOT SURE WHAT TO ASK FIRST.
YOU SAID SO YOURSELF, RIGHT?
IF THERE EXISTS A GOD-LIKE MAN...
...THEN THERE MUST EXIST A DEVIL-LIKE ONE TO COUNTERACT HIM.
...THAT'S WHAT AYUMU TOLD ME.
SINCE KIYOTAKA'S GOD...
...DID HE DISAPPEAR TO DEFEAT THAT DEVIL?
AND IS THE POWER HIDDEN IN AYUMU NECESSARY FOR TOPPLING THAT DEVIL AS WELL?
.....
...IF IT HAD BEEN THAT SIMPLE A MATTER, NO ONE WOULD BE SUFFERING.

.....?
THE PROBLEM STARTED AFTER THE DEVIL WAS DEFEATED ...
DO YOU BELIEVE IN A CREATOR?
.....
AYUMU NARUMI.

...Please grant him hope.
...that will be enough for Narumi-san now...
Even if it's faint...

A "CREATOR" MADE ALL THE THINGS THAT OCCUPY THEM.
THIS UNI-VERSE.
THIS WORLD.
IT ALL STARTED ON A SINGLE WHIM.


IF YOU'LL RECOGNIZE KIYOTAKA AS A SUPER-NATURAL FORCE, WHY DO YOU REJECT THE IDEA THAT SOMEBODY MUST HAVE CREATED HIM?
...HEY.
TO UNDERSTAND WHAT'S HAPPENED, IT'S NECESSARY TO ACCEPT THAT.
DO WE HAVE TO GO ALONG WITH THAT FANTASY STORY RIGHT OFF THE BAT?
HMPH
...KIYO-TAKA-SAN?
BUT THIS IS ALL STRAIGHT FROM GOD'S AND THE DEVIL'S MOUTHS.
THINK OF IT AS A HYPO-THETICAL SCENARIO, IF YOU MUST.
AT ONE TIME...

HE WOULD DESTROY HUMANITY.

IT FEELS LIKE I'VE STEPPED INTO THE BIBLE...
I GUESS IT MAKES ME THINK OF A FLOOD WASHING US ALL AWAY.
THAT WOULDN'T BE ENOUGH TO WIPE OUT THE ENTIRE HUMAN RACE.
WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT ISN'T SOMETHING THAT COULD BE OVERCOME WITH AN ARK.
IT IS A TIME-CONSUMING PROCESS, BUT...
...THAT METHOD CAME IN THE FORM...
...THERE IS A WAY TO ANNIHILATE MANKIND.
...OF THE ONE WE CALL THE DEVIL, BROUGHT TO EARTH BY THE CREATOR.

STRONGER THAN ANYONE.
HIGHER THAN ANYTHING.
AN ABSOLUTE BEING WHO COULD NOT BE FELLED BY ANY HUMAN HAND.

STRONGER THAN ANYONE AND HIGHER THAN ANYTHING...
LIKE SOMEONE OMNI-POTENT ...
SOMEONE LIKE MY BROTHER ...
THAT DEVIL'S NAME WAS...
... YAIBA MIZU-SHIRO.

THE SON OF A JAPANESE COUPLE...
...HE WAS INEXPLI-CABLY BORN WITH ONE RIB MISSING.
A MISSING RIB...
...THAT'S THE ONE TRAIT SHARED AMONG THESE BLADE CHILDREN.

THAT MAN ...
... YAIBA MIZU-SHIRO ...
...WAS THE FATHER OF ALL US BLADE CHILDREN.

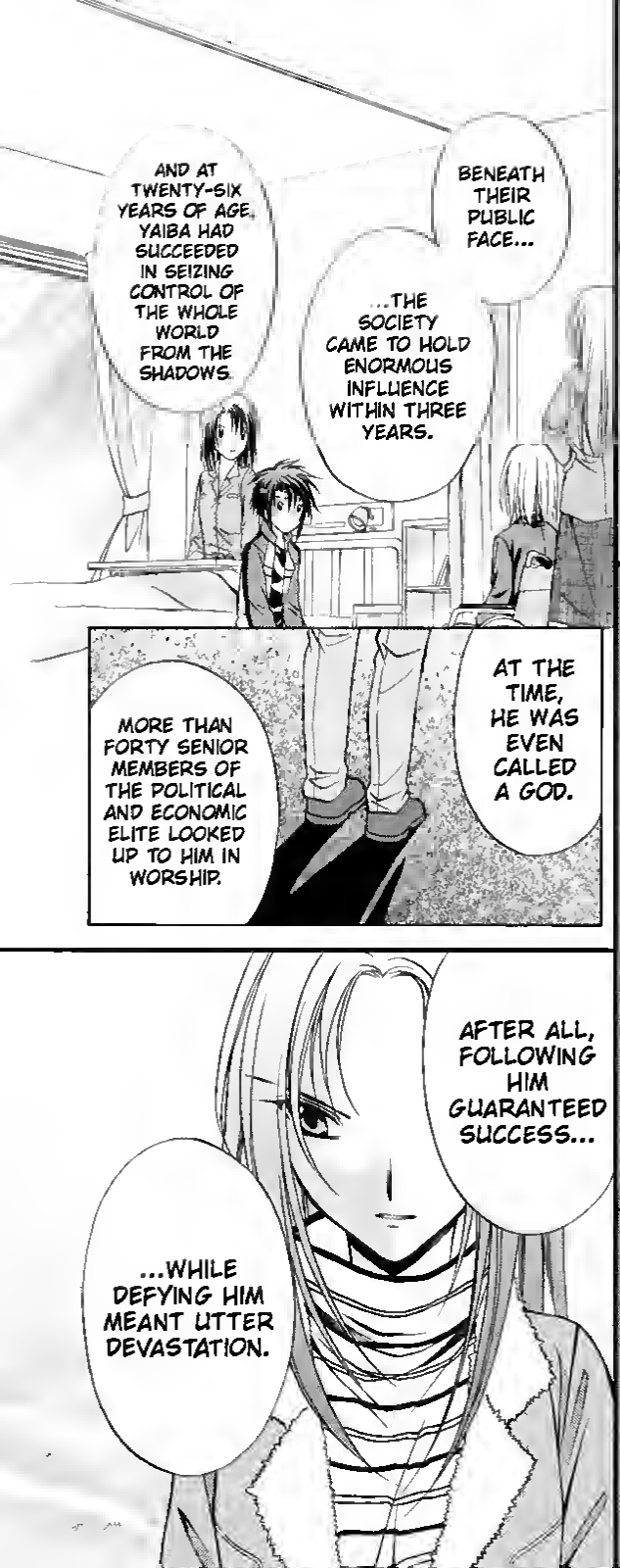
CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE
BLOOD MUSIC
THE DEVIL BROUGHT TO EARTH BY THE CREATOR TO DESTROY MANKIND.
A MAN MISSING ONE RIB...
...YAIBA MIZU-SHIRO.
AND ...

CHAPTER FIFTY-THREE
BLOOD MUSIC

...WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
I'M NOT CONTESTING THIS CREATOR STUFF.
BUT HOW COULD ONE MAN SPARK THE DESTRUCTION OF MANKIND?

.....
...YAIBA MIZUSHIRO...
...WAS BORN MORE THAN SIXTEEN YEARS BEFORE KIYOTAKA NARUMI.
KO CLACK
AND THERE ARE TENS OF BLADE CHILDREN, RIGHT?
CAN ONE MAN REALLY FATHER THAT MANY CHILDREN?
FROM A VERY YOUNG AGE, HE WAS CALLED A PRODIGY, AND AS HE MATURED, HIS ABILITIES GREW MORE APPARENT.
HE DEMONSTRATED HIS GENIUS IN EVERY FACET...
...DRAWING ATTENTION FROM THOSE AROUND HIM.
HE BECAME AN ADULT WITH A CERTAIN CHARM TO HIM.
KO
KO

KIYOTAKA NARUMI, BORN AFTER HIM, SOUNDS STRIKINGLY SIMILAR, DON'T YOU AGREE?
AN ABSOLUTE GENIUS.
WITH AN ABSOLUTE PRESENCE.
THOSE WHO KNEW KIYOTAKA WOULD SURELY AGREE.
THEY'D SAY HE, IF ANYONE, COULD RULE THE WORLD.
.....
...YOU MIGHT AS WELL THINK OF YAIBA MIZUSHIRO AS BEING THE SAME AS THE KIYOTAKA NARUMI YOU KNOW NOW.


WHEN YAIBA WAS TWENTY-THREE...
...HE FOUNDED A SOCIETY CALLED "THE KNIGHTS."
THOUGH THEIR ACTIVITIES WERE UNCLEAR, YAIBA USED THOSE CONNECTIONS TO INFILTRATE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SPHERES...
...AND THE SOCIETY GREW.
BENEATH THEIR PUBLIC FACE...
...THE SOCIETY CAME TO HOLD ENORMOUS INFLUENCE WITHIN THREE YEARS.
AND AT TWENTY-SIX YEARS OF AGE, YAIBA HAD SUCCEEDED IN SEIZING CONTROL OF THE WHOLE WORLD FROM THE SHADOWS.
AT THE TIME, HE WAS EVEN CALLED A GOD.
MORE THAN FORTY SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ELITE LOOKED UP TO HIM IN WORSHIP.
AFTER ALL, FOLLOWING HIM GUARANTEED SUCCESS...
...WHILE DEFYING HIM MEANT UTTER DEVASTATION.

AND I AGREE THAT IT WOULDN'T BE COMPLETELY UNREASON-ABLE TO SAY MY BROTHER COULD RULE THE WORLD.
...I GET THAT THIS YAIBA GUY WAS AS AMAZING AS MY BROTHER.
.....
BUT GENOCIDE'S ANOTHER MATTER.
EVEN MY BROTHER ...
...COULDN'T MAKE AN ENEMY OUT OF BILLIONS OF PEOPLE...
...AND KILL THEM ALL ON HIS OWN.
... YOU'RE RIGHT.

EVEN IF HE WERE TO MANIPULATE EVERY MAJOR WORLD POWER TO BRING ABOUT A FULL-SCALE CIVIL WAR, HUMANITY WOULD STILL SURVIVE.
IT'S DOUBTFUL THAT EVEN YAIBA, WITH HIS SOLITARY INFLUENCE, WOULD BE ABLE TO PULL THAT OFF.
HUMANITY IS TOO RESILIENT...
...AND ISN'T DUMB ENOUGH TO GO ALONG.
...THAT'S WHY, WHEN YAIBA TURNED TWENTY-NINE...
...HE LAUNCHED A NEW INITIATIVE WITHIN HIS SOCIETY.
IT WAS THE "BLADE CHILDREN PROJECT" ...
"BLADE CHILDREN PROJECT"?

...THAT'S RIGHT.
MASS PRODUCE ...
THOSE WHO PARTICIPATED IN IT AT THE TIME CALLED IT "GOD'S PLAN."
THE DEVIL'S PLAN TO MASS PRODUCE HIS CHILDREN.
...HIS CHIL-DREN!?

I'M SURE YOU'VE HEARD OF THAT TYPE OF REPRODUCTIVE PROCEDURE, NO?
ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION.
TEST-TUBE BABIES.
IN THIS DAY AND AGE, EVEN LIFE CAN BE RECREATED IN A COLD SCIENCE LAB.
WITH THE RIGHT RESOURCES AND SKILLS ...
...IT'S NOT HARD TO MASS PRODUCE A PERSON'S CHILDREN.
ALL IT TAKES IS THE RIGHT VESSEL, THE SPERM TO FERTILIZE THE EGG...
...AND PROPER NOURISHMENT AND PROTECTION UNTIL IT BECOMES A CHILD.

ETHICALLY, IT'S UNSPEAK-ABLE.
BUT OF ALL THE MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS AND GENETICISTS INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT, ALMOST NOBODY RAISED THEIR VOICES IN PROTEST.
AFTER ALL, YOU'RE IGNORING A CHILD'S NEED FOR LOVE AND FAMILY BY CREATING THEM IN BULK.
WHEN THEY INVITED WOMEN TO BECOME THE MOTHERS THROUGH EGG DONATION ...
...THE APPLICA-TIONS CAME FLOODING IN.
MOST PEOPLE WANTED TO CONTRIBUTE TO YAIBA'S LEGACY.

NOW, AS IT WAS CENTURIES AGO, EUGENICS IS A PERSISTENT BELIEF.
THE CHILDREN OF THE STRONG ARE STRONG.
THE CHILDREN OF THE WISE ARE WISE.
THERE ARE PLENTY OF PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE...
...THAT TALENT IS HEREDITARY, JUST LIKE HAIR, EYE, OR SKIN COLOR.
HOW STUPID.
NOWADAYS, IN GENETICS AND STATISTICS, THAT LINE OF THINKING IS GENERALLY DISFAVORED.
...WELL, WELL.
TON (TAP)
CAN YOU REALLY SAY THAT...?
AS THE LITTLE BROTHER OF KIYOTAKA NARUMI!?

THE LITTLE BROTHER OF KIYOTAKA NARUMI.
NOT ONLY DO YOU LOOK THE SAME...
...BUT YOUR GIFTS...
...TASTES...
...AND EVEN YOUR LUCK ARE IDENTICAL TO KIYOTAKA'S.
TON
YOU CAN'T DENY THE POWER THAT BLOOD RELATIONS HAVE.
EVEN IF YOU'RE NOT KIYOTAKA'S CHILD...
...AS HIS LITTLE BROTHER, YOU'RE LINKED THROUGH BLOOD!
SHE'S RIGHT...

AS HIS LITTLE BROTHER... I FEEL THAT POWER EVEN MORE ACUTELY...
...AND NOT JUST ME, BUT EVERYONE AROUND ME SENSES IT TOO...
AT FIRST, THE BLADE CHILDREN PROJECT WAS EXPLAINED AS A GENETIC EXPERIMENT.
TO WHAT DEGREE WOULD YAIBA'S GIFTS BE PASSED DOWN?
WOULD THE CHILDREN POSSESS TALENTS IDENTICAL TO HIS?
OR WAS YAIBA MIZUSHIRO A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME MUTATION?

...THERE WERE THOSE WHO FORESAW GREAT THINGS.
...AND ...
THIS NEW TALENT WOULD SURELY BE THE STAR ON WHICH A GREAT FUTURE WOULD BE FOUNDED.
IF EVEN TEN OF THESE OFFSPRING INHERITED YAIBA'S ABILITIES...
...THE WORLD WOULD CHANGE, THEY SAID.
...AND EIGHTY OF HIS CHILDREN WERE BORN IN VITRO.
ANY QUESTIONS OF ETHICS WERE SILENCED BY YAIBA'S INFLUENCE ...
THIS PROJECT WAS ALSO AN EXPERIMENT TO CREATE SUPERIOR HUMANS THAT WOULD LEAD FUTURE GENERATIONS OF MANKIND.
...RIO-CHAN, AND THE OTHERS ARE OF THAT GROUP...
RUTH-KUN, KANON-KUN...

.....
...SO YOU'RE ALL CHILDREN BONDED BY THE BLOOD OF ONE FATHER...
THAT'S RIGHT.
NOT ONLY KANON, BUT ALSO RIO, ASAZUKI, AND RYOUKO ARE MY SIBLINGS.
I WAS BORN LAST.
...THOUGH ASIDE FROM KANON, I WOULDN'T CALL ANY OF THE OTHERS MY BROTHERS OR SISTERS.
PON (PAT)
IMMEDI-ATELY AFTER THEY WERE BORN ...

...THE CHILDREN HAD ONE RIB SURGICALLY REMOVED AS A SYMBOL THAT YAIBA MIZUSHIRO WAS THEIR FATHER.
NATURALLY, OBJECTIONS WERE RAISED AT THIS, BUT ...
...THE MAJORITY WERE IN FAVOR OF THIS PROCEDURE AS PROOF OF THE GRAND STRAIN AND ENFORCED IT...
NAMED AFTER THE FOUNDER OF THE PROJECT ...
...THE CHILDREN WERE APTLY NAMED "THE CHILDREN OF YAIBA (BLADE)" OR "THE BLADE CHILDREN".
AT THE TIME, THE NAME WAS A SYMBOL OF BLESSING ...
...BUT LATER IT CAME TO BE A CURSE.

GET IT?
NOT ONE OF THOSE EIGHTY WAS AN EXCEPTION, YOU HEAR?
BY THE TIME THE CHILDREN HAD TURNED FOUR, THEIR SUPERIOR ABILITIES OVER THE AVERAGE CHILD...
...AND THEIR LIKENESS TO YAIBA BECAME APPARENT.
...UNDER THE MANAGE-MENT OF THE SOCIETY ...
...THE CHILDREN WERE SENT TO LIVE WITH THEIR INDIVIDUAL MOTHERS.
THAT'S ...
...ABNORMAL IN EVERY SENSE OF THE WORD.
THEY CLAIMED THAT WE HAD BEEN GIVEN THE BLOOD OF GOD.
BUT THERE WERE PEOPLE WHO WENT NUTS OVER THESE RESULTS.

BUT IT WENT AGAINST COMMON SENSE TO AN ABSURD DEGREE.
IT WAS POSSIBLE THAT ALL EIGHTY MIGHT LOOK SIMILAR.
BUT THEIR ABIL-ITIES...
...THE AIR ABOUT THEM...
...WAS IT RIGHT THAT THERE EXISTED A BLOOD-STRAIN THAT GUARANTEED THOSE THINGS WOULD EMERGE IN ALL CHILDREN?
NATURALLY, THERE WERE SOME IN THE SOCIETY WHO CAME TO FEAR THE PROJECT.
MOVED TO ACTION BY THEIR OWN MIS-GIVINGS ...
...THEY MADE A DIRECT APPEAL ABOUT THE DANGERS TO YAIBA, THE SOURCE OF THE PROJECT.
EVEN MORE SO WHEN ...
...SECOND AND THIRD WAVES OF BLADE CHILDREN WERE PROPOSED.
DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT'S SO DANGEROUS ABOUT CREATING ALL THESE SUPERIOR YAIBA MIZUSHIRO LOOK-ALIKES?
IS IT A SIMPLE MATTER OF ANTHRO-POLOGY, PERHAPS?

!
.....
.....
THE HOMO SAPIENS WHO DROVE OFF THE NEANDERTHAL ...!
KIYOTAKA-SAN...
...SAID THAT LIKE HE WAS TRYING TO TELL ME SOME-THING...
IN THE EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS, HOMO SAPIENS, THE ANCESTORS OF OUR MODERN SPECIES, KILLED OTHER EARLY HUMAN BEINGS...
...UNTIL THEY BECAME THE ONLY REMAINING STRAIN OF THE SPECIES.
HUMANS, AS WE KNOW THEM TODAY, ARE WHAT WAS LEFT AFTER OTHER PRIMITIVE HUMAN TYPES WERE KILLED.

THE NEANDERTHAL IN PARTICULAR...
...WAS COMPLETELY WIPED OUT BY THE MORE AGGRESSIVE AND HIGHLY SKILLED HOMO SAPIENS...!
OH BOY.
KIYOTAKA-SAMA ALWAYS DID LIKE DROPPING HINTS.
EITHER WAY...
...IT'S THE NATURAL EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS OF SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST.
NEANDERTHALS WERE THE FIRST SUPERIOR RULERS OF EARTH.
BUT FINALLY THEY APPEARED—
THE MORE SUPERIOR AND VIOLENT HOMO SAPIENS, WHO WIPED OUT THE NEANDERTALS OVER THOUSANDS OF YEARS.
NO MATTER HOW DOMINANT A PEOPLE MAY BE...
...ONCE A SUPERIOR POPULATION EMERGES THAT DOESN'T WANT TO SHARE THE TITLE OF SUPREME SPECIES, THEY'RE FINISHED.

PART OF THE SOCIETY FORESAW THAT.
THEY SURMISED THAT PERHAPS YAIBA MIZUSHIRO WAS THE NEW RACE THAT WOULD FORCE HUMANITY TO EXTINCTION.
THAT WE WOULD ACCELERATE THE BREEDING OF THAT NEW RACE ...
...AND ARTIFICIALLY CARRY OUT THE EXTER-MINATION OF MANKIND.
THINK ABOUT IT.
THE CHILDREN FROM YAIBA'S BLOOD WERE EXCEPTIONAL.
THEY HAD THE CHARISMA TO ENSNARE THE MASSES.
THEY TRUMPED NORMAL HUMANS IN EVERY WAY...

AND WHAT WOULD THE OFFSPRING OF THOSE CHILDREN BE LIKE?
IF THE SECOND AND THIRD GENERATIONS OF THE PROJECT WENT INTO PRODUCTION, THERE'D BE EVEN MORE CHILDREN.
AS ADULTS, BLADE CHILDREN WOULD SURELY RISE TO POSITIONS OF POWER AND RUN THE WORLD.
...MANKIND WOULD FALL UNDER THE CONTROL OF THOSE WHO CARRIED YAIBA'S BLOOD.
AND EVEN-TUALLY ...
...HIS INFLUENCE WOULD SPAN THE GLOBE AND SPREAD ENDLESSLY
IF YAIBA'S POWERS EMERGED IN THOSE CHILDREN AS WELL...
...LIES SOMETHING EVEN MORE FRIGHTENING ...
... THERE-IN...

THERE WERE SOME WHO USED TO POINT OUT...
...THAT YAIBA OFTEN ACTED AS THOUGH HE INSTINCTUALLY HATED PEOPLE.
HE HAD THAT AIR ABOUT HIM.
MOST OF THEM ASSUMED THEY WERE IMAGINING THINGS OR THAT IT WAS JUST A FLUKE AND DIDN'T PURSUE THE MATTER.
BUT WHAT IF THAT HATRED WAS INGRAINED IN YAIBA'S TRUE NATURE?
WHAT IF THAT NATURE WAS PASSED DOWN TO HIS CHILDREN TOO?
WHAT IF YAIBA'S STRAIN...
...TREATED THE REST OF THE HUMAN RACE LIKE NEANDER-THALS?
WHAT IF THEY GREW INTO A CLASS OF RULERS?

ONE RULER CANNOT WIPE OUT A HUGE MASS OF PEOPLE.
BUT WHAT IF THAT RULER IS HIMSELF A HUGE MASS OF PEOPLE?
AND IF THAT MASS OF RULERS WAS UNITED BY THE SAME INTENT AND INSTINCTS?
WHAT IF YAIBA'S BLOOD BOUND THE CHILDREN TOGETHER THAT RESOLUTELY?
SUPERIOR TO HUMANS.
AND MORE FERO-CIOUS.
IF THERE WERE A CLAN OF MULTIPLYING RULERS UNITED IN PURPOSE...
...THE HUMAN RACE WOULD FALL NO MATTER HOW MUCH THEY RESISTED...
...JUST AS MODERN MAN DROVE OUT THE NEANDER-THALS.

WHEN YAIBA WAS APPROACHED BY ANYONE WHO ASKED THIS, HE LAUGHED AND TOLD THEM...
...EXACTLY WHAT RUTH-KUN JUST SAID ABOUT THE CREATOR AND HIS WHIM...
"MY WILL IS TO WIPE OUT MANKIND. MY BLOOD WILL PASS ALONG THAT WILL."
"WHEN MATURE, THE BLADE CHILDREN WILL BRING ABOUT THE ANNI-HILATION OF MAN."
"THERE IS NO ESCAPE."

MY BROTHER AND I ARE PRACTICALLY THE SAME PERSON.
WE NEVER TRIED TO BE THE SAME, AND YET, FOR AS FAR BACK AS I CAN REMEMBER, HE AND I FELL INTO THE SAME PATTERNS.
WHAT IS THIS ...?
THIS WHOLE PROBLEM ...
...COMES BACK TO ME...!?
YAIBA'S BLOODLINE WOULD SPAN GENERATIONS.
THE POWER AND WILL TO SUBJUGATE AND ELIMINATE HUMANS WOULD CONTINUE ON.
THEY'D USE MODERN MEANS OF REPRODUCTION AND EXPLODE FORTH IN NUMBERS.
THAT IS HOW THE CREATOR WOULD WIPE OUT MANKIND.

ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE, THE FIRST MAN, ADAM, HAD ONE RIB REMOVED.
THAT ONE MAN EVENTUALLY POPULATED THE EARTH...
...AND WITH HIS SUPERIOR ABILITY AND FEROCITY, RULED OVER ALL CREATURES.
YAIBA TOO WAS BORN WITHOUT A RIB.
HE POSSESSED THE SYMBOL OF THE NEW RULER OF EARTH.
YAIBA WOULD USE HIS BLOOD RELATIVES TO FILL THE EARTH AND MAKE IT NEW AGAIN.
HE WAS THE DEVIL FOR MANKIND TO FEAR.
SUPERIOR TO HUMANS AND POSSESSING GREAT SKILL AND BRUTALITY... A NEW RACE OF HUMANS...
AND THE FIRST DESCENDANTS OF THAT NEW ADAM'S BLOOD ARE THE BLADE CHILDREN.

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SUPERIOR TO HUMANS AND POSSESSING GREAT SKILL AND BRUTALITY... A NEW RACE OF HUMANS...
AND THE FIRST DESCENDANTS OF THAT NEW ADAM'S BLOOD ARE THE BLADE CHILDREN.

THEY'RE THE CHILDREN CURSED BY YAIBA'S BLOOD TO DESTROY HUMANITY.

CHAPTER FIFTY-FOUR
UNTOUCHED BY HUMAN HANDS

A NEW ADAM SENT TO EARTH TO REPOPULATE THE WORLD: YAIBA MIZUSHIRO.
THE EXACT OPPOSITE OF MY BROTHER.

USING MODERN-DAY REPRO-DUCTIVE METHODS...
...HE MANAGED TO MULTIPLY THE NUMBER OF HIS OFFSPRING EXPONEN-TIALLY...
YAIBA'S BLOOD, WHICH IS SET TO WIPE OUT MAN-KIND...
GU (GRIP)
SO THAT'S THE BLADE CHILDREN?

...YOU'RE WORKING TO DESTROY THE HUMAN RACE AS WE SPEAK?
...IN OTHER WORDS, WITH THAT BLOOD IN YOUR VEINS...
...DON'T WORRY.
...BUT...
IF IT WAS, I WOULDN'T BE HERE TALKING TO YOU.
THAT ISN'T MY WILL YET.

AT MY AGE, YAIBA MIZUSHIRO WAS LIKE A MERCIFUL GOD.
HE POSSESSED THE EYES OF A KIND RULER.
HE EVEN SAID THAT HE BELIEVED HE WOULD LEAD THE PEOPLE TO A BRIGHT FUTURE...
WHEN YAIBA WAS TWENTY YEARS OLD, HE RECEIVED AN ORACLE.
THAT'S WHEN HE LEARNED WHY HE WAS BORN WITH SUCH POWER...
...AND WHAT HE WAS MEANT TO DO WITH IT.
IT WAS AS IF A SWITCH WAS FLIPPED IN YAIBA, AND HIS DEMONIC NATURE AWAKENED.

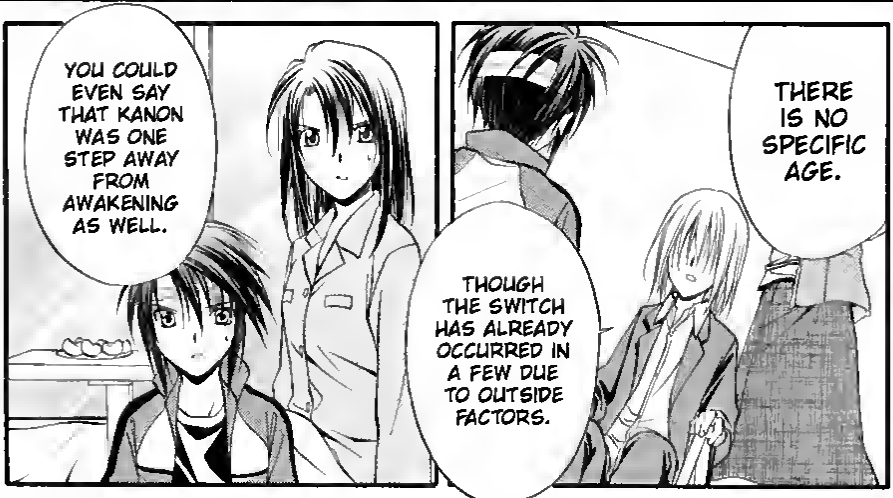
HE WAS NO MORE ...?
THAT WAS ALL IT TOOK ...
...FOR THE YAIBA WHO HAD EXISTED UP TO THAT POINT TO BE NO MORE.
THE CHILDREN WOULD LET THEIR TALENTS DEVELOP AMONG OTHER CHILDREN ...
...AND WOULD GROW UP WITH MAGNETIC PERSON-ALITIES.
OR THEY WOULD BE RECOGNIZED FOR THEIR UNCANNY ABILITIES.
YAIBA ALSO SAID...
...THAT THE BLADE CHILDREN WOULD AWAKEN LIKE HIM WHEN THEY MATURED.

IT WOULD BE TREMENDOUSLY EFFECTIVE.
SO FIRST THEY SET THEMSELVES UP AS ANGELS AMONG THEIR PEERS.
HIDING THEIR TRUE NATURES, ONLY AFTER THEY WERE WELL-SOCIALIZED ...
IF THEY'D REGARDED HUMANS WITH CONTEMPT AND MALICE FROM THE MOMENT THEY WERE BORN, THEY WOULD QUICKLY BE OSTRACIZED BY SOCIETY.
...WOULD THE DEVIL'S BLOOD FINALLY AWAKEN.
EXACTLY.
...YOU MEAN LIKE THE TROJAN HORSE ...!
THE CREATOR WORKS IN WONDROUS WAYS.

...JUST AS THE SYMPTOMS OF A CANCER ARE SLOW TO APPEAR, ALLOWING THE DISEASE TO MUTATE CONSIDERABLY AND MAKING INTERVENTION NEARIMPOSSIBLE
THE DAMAGE THEY WOULD CAUSE WOULD BE AS SERIOUS AND SINISTER AS THAT OF A LONG-DORMANT VIRUS...
SO EVEN WHEN HE SUDDENLY WENT DEVIL...
AND THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE HE WOULDN'T HAVE GAINED HIS POWER SO EASILY
IF YAIBA HAD ACTED ON HIS DEMONIC IMPULSES FROM AN EARLY AGE, HE'D HAVE BEEN QUICKLY REJECTED BY SOCIETY.
...BEING DEEPLY ROOTED IN SOCIETY, HE HID IT...
...AND DIDN'T OPENLY BETRAY THE TRUST OTHERS HAD PLACED IN HIM.
UP UNTIL THE AGE OF TWENTY, YAIBA WAS AN ANGEL.
A GOD.
...AFTER FURTHER INVESTIGATION ...

...I LEARNED THAT AFTER HIS TWENTIETH BIRTHDAY, YAIBA DROVE PLENTY OF PEOPLE TO DEATH FROM HIS CONCEALMENT IN THE SHADOWS.

...THE BLADE CHILDREN ARE STILL "SAFE"?
...YOU MEAN NOW...
FOR NOW.
...YES.


YOU COULD EVEN SAY THAT KANON WAS ONE STEP AWAY FROM AWAKENING AS WELL.
THERE IS NO SPECIFIC AGE.
THOUGH THE SWITCH HAS ALREADY OCCURRED IN A FEW DUE TO OUTSIDE FACTORS.

WHEN THE BLADE CHILDREN'S MURDEROUS INSTINCTS ARE PREMATURELY TRIGGERED WITHOUT ENOUGH SOCIALIZATION...
...DO YOU KNOW HOW THEY END UP?
.....
...THEY BECOME DEMONIC KILLING MACHINES WITH NO SENSE OF DISCRIMI-NATION...
...AWFUL, REALLY.

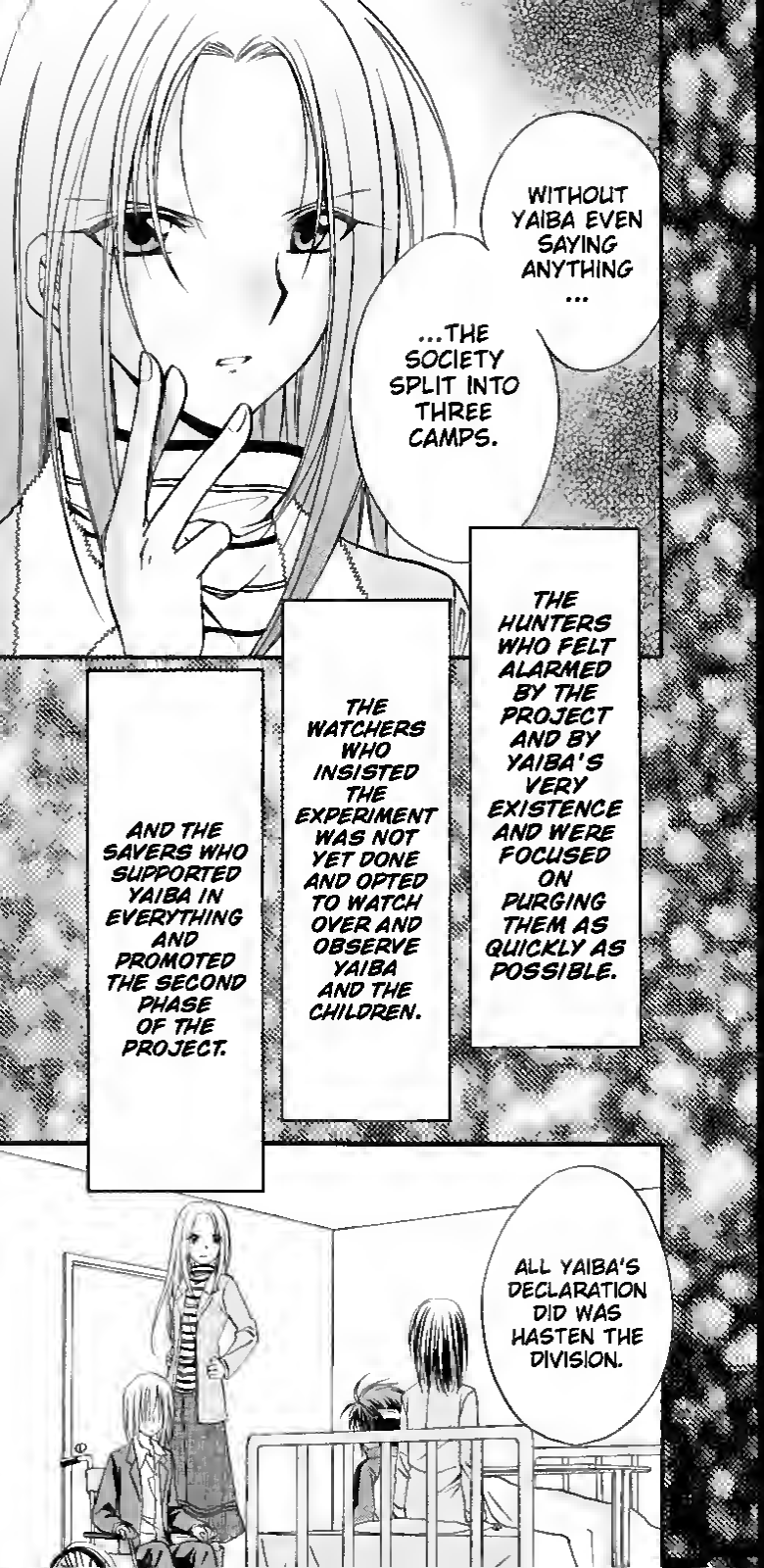
BUT AT LEAST IT MAKES FOR FEWER CASUALTIES.
THEY TRULY...
...BECOME PURE MONSTERS.
IT SEEMS THAT WITH THEIR UNDEVELOPED MINDS AND BODIES, THEY CAN'T HANDLE THE AWAKENED BLOOD OF YAIBA.
EITHER WAY, THE BLADE CHILDREN ARE FRIGHTENINGLY PROBLEMATIC WHEN THE SWITCH HAS BEEN BEEN FLIPPED.
...AND WERE ABLE TO ACT METHODICALLY, THE DAMAGES WOULD BE GREATER.
IF THEY POSSESSED A CONTROLLED POWER LIKE YAIBA'S...
...I, AS WELL AS...

WE WON'T BE WHO WE ARE ANY-MORE.
GI (GRIP)
!
...RIO, ASAZUKI... AND THE OTHER REMAINING BLADE CHILDREN ...
...WILL FEEL YAIBA'S BLOOD AWAKEN SOON.
OUR THOUGHTS AND INTENTIONS ...
...WILL DISAPPEAR UNDER THE WILL OF THE BLOOD OF YAIBA THAT FLOWS THROUGH OUR BODIES.
THAT IS...
...OUR DESTINY.

...THERE-FORE...
...DON'T YOU THINK IT WOULD BE BEST TO KILL THE BLADE CHILDREN NOW...
OTHERWISE THEY'LL WAGE WAR AGAINST HUMANITY...
...AND WIPE THEM OUT WHILE YOU HAVE THE CHANCE?
...AND WIPE US OUT FIRST.

...AND IN REPLY, YAIBA SMILED AND SAID...
"I'M BORED, SO I'M JUST MAKING MY TASK A BIT MORE CHALLENGING."
CAN WE REALLY BELIEVE IT?
THOSE WHO OPPOSED HIM WONDERED THE SAME THING...
...THE DEVIL SAID ALL THAT...?
YAIBA SAID IT HIMSELF, RIGHT?
TELLING THAT TO THE VERY PEOPLE WHO OPPOSED HIS PLAN IS LIKE SHOOTING HIMSELF IN THE FOOT, ISN'T IT?
HE MADE EVERYTHING TURN OUT THE WAY HE IMAGINED IT.
WITH ALL HIS ABILITIES AND GOOD FORTUNE ...
...YAIBA HAD NEVER SUFFERED A SETBACK OR DIFFICULTY.
YAIBA INTENTIONALLY CREATED AN OPPOSITION FORCE.
HE WANTED TO MAKE HIS GAME OF HUMAN GENOCIDE MORE FUN.
YAIBA WAS ABSOLUTE.
AS THOUGH HE HAD SOME MIGHTY BEING'S PROTECTION.

IT'S NO SURPRISE A BEING LIKE THAT MIGHT THINK FROM TIME TO TIME...
...
"AWW, I'M SO BORED"
...
...IS IT?
KIYOTAKA HAD THE SAME TENDENCY, DID HE NOT?
HE'D MAKE HANDICAPS FOR HIMSELF ON PURPOSE, JUST FOR THE CHALLENGE.
LIKE HOW HE'S MANIPULATING YOU NOW.
IT MIGHT BE NOTHING MORE THAN A WAY TO PASS THE TIME, NO?
SO...
...WHAT DID PEOPLE DO WHEN THEY LEARNED THE TRUTH?
...WHAT ELSE?
THEY BUILT UP A RESISTANCE FORCE TO KILL OFF YAIBA AND HIS DREADED CHILDREN FIRST.


WITHOUT YAIBA EVEN SAYING ANYTHING ...
...THE SOCIETY SPLIT INTO THREE CAMPS.
THE HUNTERS WHO FELT ALARMED BY THE PROJECT AND BY YAIBA'S VERY EXISTENCE AND WERE FOCUSED ON PURGING THEM AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.
THE WATCHERS WHO INSISTED THE EXPERIMENT WAS NOT YET DONE AND OPTED TO WATCH OVER AND OBSERVE YAIBA AND THE CHILDREN.
AND THE SAVERS WHO SUPPORTED YAIBA IN EVERYTHING AND PROMOTED THE SECOND PHASE OF THE PROJECT.
ALL YAIBA'S DECLARATION DID WAS HASTEN THE DIVISION.
THEY GATHERED TOGETH-ER...
...AND WERE CALLED THE "HUNTERS."

THOSE WHO LOOKED TO THE FUTURE FELL INTO THE HUNTERS CATEGORY.
THE SAVERS CONSIDERED THE ALLEGED THREAT A FALSE RUMOR AND PAID NO HEED.
THE WATCHERS WERE THOSE WHO HAD ALWAYS FOUND THE PROJECT HARD TO BELIEVE AND ONLY KEPT A WATCHFUL EYE ON PROCEEDINGS.
IT WAS ALL JUST ENTERTAIN-MENT FOR YAIBA...
...AS THE SOCIETY ENTERED INTO A FEUD WITH THE HUNTERS, WHO HAD SEVERED TIES TO THE OTHER GROUPS.
THE SECOND AND THIRD PHASES OF THE PROJECT WERE TEMPORARILY PUT ON HOLD ...
...BUT THE EIGHTY BLADE CHILDREN WHO HAD TURNED FIVE BY THEN SUDDENLY FOUND THEIR LIVES IN DANGER.
THEY HAD TO KILL THEM WHILE THEY WERE YOUNG...
...OR THEY'D GROW UP AND BECOME INVINCIBLE WITH THEIR FULLY-DEVELOPED WIT AND AGILITY.
SO ALL THEY COULD DO WAS MURDER THESE FIVE-YEAR-OLDS.
THE HUNTERS' GOAL WAS TO KEEP YAIBA'S BLOOD FROM SURVIVING ANYWHERE ON EARTH.

...THEY WOULD EVENTUALLY BRING MANY PEOPLE TO DEATH.
THOUGH THEY WERE TAME AS CHILDREN ...
IF THEY HAD LEFT THE CHILDREN ALONE, GREAT SUFFERING WAS SURE TO COME IN THE FUTURE.
BUT THE HUNTERS WERE ALSO RIGHT IN WHAT THEY DID.
YOU SAID IT.
...THAT'S CRAZY...
WILL YOU STILL SAY THEY SHOULD HAVE LET THE CHILDREN LIVE ON?
TO DATE...
...MORE THAN TWENTY BLADE CHILDREN HAVE BEEN KILLED.

...THAT OURS IS A CURSED EXISTENCE.
...MOST BLADE CHILDREN HAVE REALIZED ...
INCLUDING MYSELF...
THE FEW WHO HAVE BEEN LUCKY ENOUGH NOT TO GET CAUGHT UP IN THE STRIFE LIVE HAPPY LIVES UNAWARE OF THEIR IDENTITIES, BUT...
THEN AGAIN ...
...WITNESSING THAT MUCH BLOODSHED AND ESCAPING ESCALATING ATTACKS OF ALL KINDS WAS BOUND TO GET THE POINT ACROSS EVENTUALLY, ALBEIT RUDELY.
EVEN IF THEY WERE ONLY FIVE, THEY DID HAVE YAIBA'S BLOOD.
THEY WERE SMART ENOUGH TO FIGURE IT OUT.
...I'M SURE YOU KNOW HOW IT GOES WITH THOSE WHO CRACK UNDER THE CONSTANT THREAT, EH?
... YEAH.

...BUT THE FEAR IS SO DEEPLY ROOTED IN HER SUBCONSCIOUS, IT SEEMS SHE STILL CAN'T LIVE A NORMAL LIFE.
SAYOKO SHIRANAGATANI IS A UNIQUE CASE.
THOUGH SHE EXPERIENCED THE VIOLENCE, HER AMNESIA SPARED HER...
KA (CLACK)
EXACTLY.
THE HUNTERS WHO SPLIT FROM THE SOCIETY COULDN'T HAVE BEEN LEFT TO THEIR OWN DEVICES FOR LONG, RIGHT?
...SO...
...WHAT BECAME OF THE FIGHTING?
IN THE END, THEY WERE NOTHING MORE THAN A PASSING WHIM FOR YAIBA.

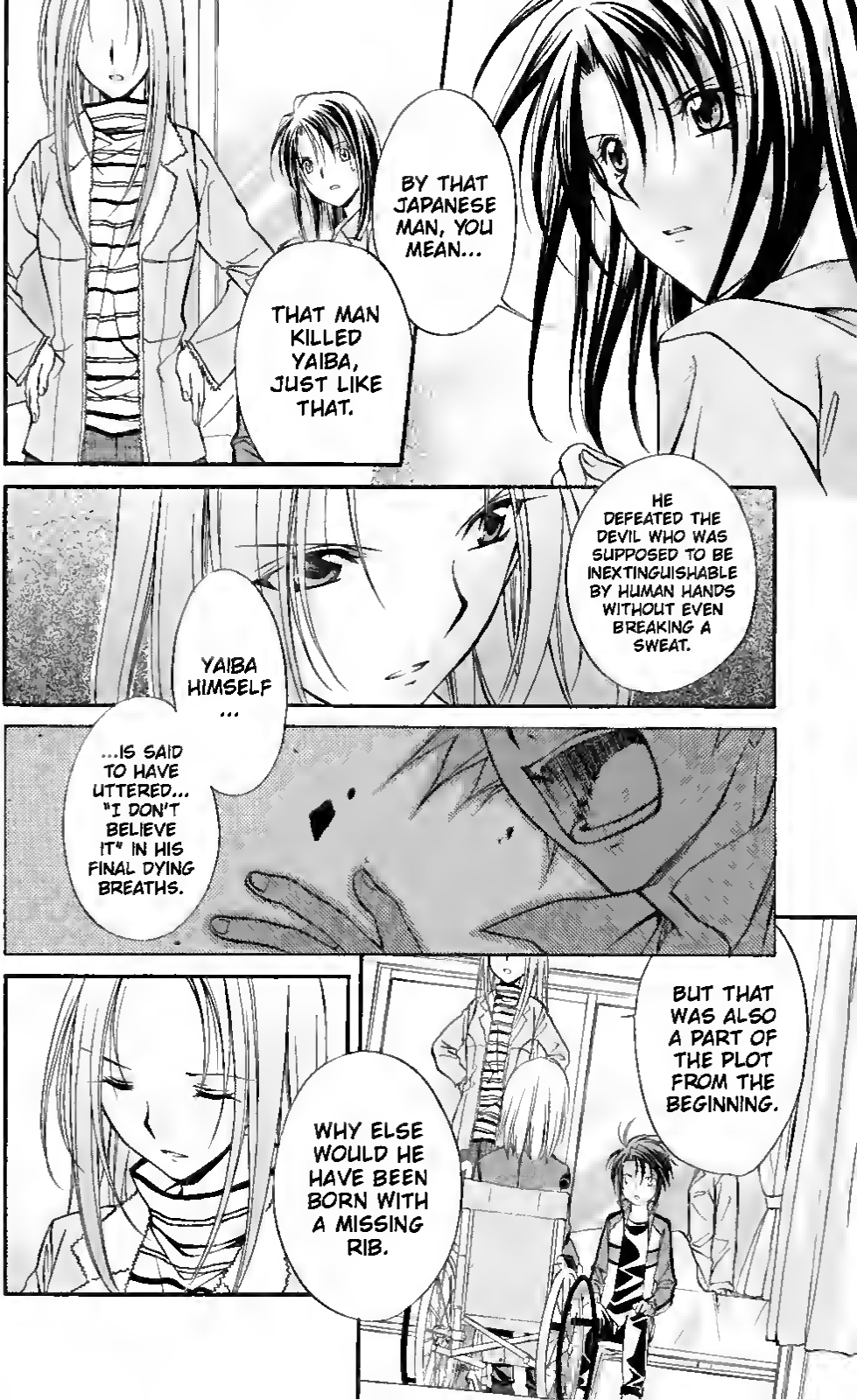
FIRST OF ALL, THE HUNTERS REALIZED THAT...
コツ KO (CLICK)
コツ KO
...YAIBA COULD NOT BE KILLED BY HUMAN HANDS.
COULDN'T BE KILLED ...
...BY HUMAN HANDS?
INITIALLY, THE HUNTERS FOCUSED ALL THEIR ENERGY ON THE SOURCE OF THE THREAT— YAIBA.
BUT NO MATTER WHAT THEY DID, THEY COULDN'T KILL HIM.
SOMETIMES YAIBA WOULD EVEN ORDER THEM TO KILL HIM, STAND RIGHT BEFORE THEM...
TON (TAP)
...AND PRESS THEIR GUNS TO HIS FOREHEAD.

...BUT THEY COULDN'T KILL HIM.
FU CHEHD
NO BLADE ...
...NO EXPLOSIVE ...
...NO BULLET WORKED AGAINST YAIBA, EVEN AT POINT-BLANK RANGE.
IT WAS LIKE YAIBA WAS PROTECTED BY AN EXTRA-ORDINARY DEGREE OF LUCK AND UNBELIEVABLE COINCIDENCE.
EVERY-THING WENT AS YAIBA WISHED IT.
SOME UNKNOWN BEING WAS PROTECTING YAIBA.
.....

...JUST LIKE MY BROTHER.
RARE AND EXCEPTIONAL GOOD LUCK...
...THE POWER TO ATTRACT COINCIDENCE...
JUST LIKE KIYOTAKA, WOULDN'T YOU SAY?
....WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY?
... EVERYTHING GOES YOUR WAY.
IF YOU JUST ASK FOR IT...
BUT, AYUMU-KUN...
...YOU YOURSELF HAVE FACED DEATH COUNTLESS TIMES, AND YET YOU STILL LIVE.
AM I WRONG?
NOTHING ...

BUT ...
IT'S JUST THAT YAIBA WAS THE ULTIMATE BEING— INDESTRUC-TIBLE BY HUMANS.
...HIS DOWNFALL CAME ALL TOO SOON.
...IN THIS BATTLE ...
...THAT YAIBA WAS ABSOLUTE.
...BUT THOSE ASSOCIATED WITH YAIBA WHO HAD TO FACE THE TERRIFYING REALITY...
...IT WASN'T JUST THE HUNTERS ...

HE WAS THE DEVIL IN MAN'S CLOTHING.
YAIBA'S RULERSHIP GREW EVEN STRONGER ...
KURU (PWIP)
...AND PHASE TWO OF THE BLADE CHILDREN PROJECT WAS SLATED TO START UP AGAIN.
THE HUNTERS WERE DRIVEN AGAINST THE WALL...
KO (CLICK)
...AND THE SITUATION WAS DIRE.
AS FOR THE BLADE CHILDREN WHO WERE BEING TARGETED, YAIBA REINFORCED THE SOCIETY'S PROTECTION OVER THEM.
KO
MANKIND BEGAN ITS DARK DESCENT INTO DESTRUCTION.
BUT AT THAT TIME...
...A LONE ...
...TWENTY-YEAR-OLD JAPANESE MAN APPEARED.


BY THAT JAPANESE MAN, YOU MEAN...
THAT MAN KILLED YAIBA, JUST LIKE THAT.
HE DEFEATED THE DEVIL WHO WAS SUPPOSED TO BE INEXTINGUISHABLE BY HUMAN HANDS WITHOUT EVEN BREAKING A SWEAT.
YAIBA HIMSELF ...
...IS SAID TO HAVE UTTERED... "I DON'T BELIEVE IT" IN HIS FINAL DYING BREATHS.
BUT THAT WAS ALSO A PART OF THE PLOT FROM THE BEGINNING.
WHY ELSE WOULD HE HAVE BEEN BORN WITH A MISSING RIB.

SO WHY DID HE LACK A RIB?
BUT YAIBA CREATED A FLOURISHING BLOODLINE WITHOUT AN EVE.
THE REASON ADAM LACKED A RIB...
...IS EXPLAINED IN THE BIBLE— THE RIB WAS REMOVED AND BECAME THE FOUNDATION FROM WHICH EVE WAS FORMED, THE WOMAN NECESSARY TO GROW HIS BLOOD-LINE.
WHAT WAS MEANT TO BE FORMED FROM THAT RIB?
ARE YOU SERIOUSLY TELLING ME THAT YAIBA'S MISSING RIB CORRESPONDED TO MY BROTHER!?
KIYOTAKA...
...NARUMI!

BUT THIS EVE WAS NOT A WOMAN TO BREED ADAM'S CHILDREN.
AT THE TIME, YAIBA WAS THIRTY-SIX YEARS OLD.
KIYOTAKA WAS TWENTY.
SIXTEEN YEARS LATER, GOD HAD GIVEN US EVE.
BINGO.
IT WAS A MAN.
THAT'S HOW EVE KILLED ADAM.
IF HE WAS FORMED FROM ADAM...
...THERE'S NOTHING STRANGE ABOUT HIM HAVING THE POWER TO KILL ADAM, NO?
AND THE TWO WEREN'T JOINED...
...THEY WERE MEANT TO OPPOSE EACH OTHER IN A FIGHT TO THE DEATH.

WHAT IS THIS...?
SO CONTRIVED AND ARTIFICIAL...
IT'S LIKE A MADE-UP FAIRY-TALE PLOT.
GOD AND THE DEVIL. ADAM AND EVE.
NECESSARY OPPOSING SIDES!?
WHEN TWENTY-YEAR-OLD KIYOTAKA NARUMI SHOT YAIBA, THE SOCIETY'S CHAOS SUBSIDED.
YAIBA'S GLOBAL INFLUENCE STARTED TO DISSIPATE.
KIYOTAKA SAID...
KIYOTAKA WOULD NOT BECOME THE NEW RULER.
HE WAS THE GOD OF DESTRUCTION WHO WOULD ERASE EVEN YAIBA'S SHADOW.
...THAT WHEN HE WAS TWENTY, HE RECEIVED AN ORACLE.

HE KNEW WHY HE WAS BORN WITH HIS POWERS...
...AND WHAT HE WAS MEANT TO DO...
...HE SAID.
KIYOTAKA AWAKENED AS GOD...
...AND DESTROYED YAIBA AND HIS AMBITIONS.
ANOTHER CREATOR!
...THAT WAS THE WILL OF YET ANOTHER CREATOR.
GOD AND THE DEVIL.
IF THERE ARE GOOD AND EVIL ...
...THEN THERE MUST BE TWO OPPOSING CREATORS.
WHAT YOU COULD CALL A GOOD CREATOR AND AN EVIL CREATOR.

ONE CREATED YAIBA, WHO WOULD DESTROY MANKIND...
...AND THE OTHER TOOK A RIB AND CREATED KIYOTAKA.
IT WAS AS THOUGH EARTH BECAME THE CHESS BOARD...
...FOR THE GAME OF CREATION AND DESTRUCTION.
AS FAR AS HUMANS ARE CONCERNED, THE ULTIMATE AND ABSOLUTE BEINGS OF YAIBA AND KIYOTAKA...
...ARE MERELY THE PAWNS OF ABSOLUTE BEINGS PRESIDING OVER US.
AND THEN KIYOTAKA KILLED YAIBA.
...AFTER THAT, YAIBA'S BLOOD DESCENDANTS ...
...THE BLADE CHILDREN WOULD BE WIPED OUT, AND THE GAME WOULD BE OVER.

HE HESITATED AT THE PROSPECT OF KILLING THOSE SMALL CHILDREN, DIDN'T HE?
...HOW-EVER.
THERE WERE FIFTY-EIGHT BLADE CHILDREN ALIVE AFTER YAIBA DIED.
THEY WERE ALL SIX YEARS OLD AT THE TIME.
ANY SELF-RESPECTING PERSON WOULD HESITATE.
THE HUNTERS WERE FIRMLY RESOLVED TO KILL THEM.
BUT THE SAVERS AND WATCHERS WERE WARY ABOUT SLAUGH-TERING CHILDREN.

HUMAN HANDS COULD NOT SAVE THE CHILDREN.
REGARDLESS OF THEIR DOUBTS AND HESITATIONS, THEY'D MADE UP THEIR MINDS.
BUT THERE WAS NOBODY WHO COULD DENY THE THREAT POSED BY YAIBA'S BLOOD.
...
WHAT DID KIYOTAKA-SAN DO?
HE, IF ANYONE, HAS WHAT IT WOULD TAKE—
KIYOTAKA WAS BROUGHT TO EARTH TO KILL YAIBA.
HE WAS THE GOD OF DESTRUCTION.
DO YOU THINK HE WAS ALSO BESTOWED WITH THE POWER TO SAVE YAIBA'S CHILDREN?
KIYOTAKA CAN'T OVERRIDE THE ROLE OF DESTRUCTION GIVEN TO HIM BY THE CREATOR.
.....

...KIYOTAKA PRESENTED A SINGLE RAY OF HOPE FOR THE SITUATION.
...BUT...
YOU, WHO WERE ONLY FIVE YEARS OLD AT THE TIME...
...AYUMU NARUMI.
LIKE KIYOTAKA AND YET NOT KIYOTAKA.
LIKE GOD AND YET NOT GOD.
BUT...

SO WHY ...
...ONE WHO STILL POSSESSED THOSE GOD-LIKE ABILITIES.
YAIBA MAY BE DEAD, BUT THE GOD KIYOTAKA IS STILL ALIVE.
...DID THE CREATOR CREATE AYUMU-KUN, DO YOU SUPPOSE?
SO THERE'S NO NEED FOR ANOTHER GOD WITH THE SAME POWERS.

...AS A NEW GOD...?

Spiral
THE BONDS OF REASONING

CHAPTER FIFTY-FIVE
THE PLAYER ON
THE OTHER SIDE

...THIS BOY...
...WILL SAVE THE BLADE CHILDREN ...
...AS THE NEW GOD...!?

...BECAUSE I'M KIYOTAKA NARUMI'S LITTLE BROTHER...
...YOU'RE SAYING I CAN SAVE THE BLADE CHILDREN?
.....
IT'S A MATTER OF THE LAYOUT.
WHEN HE LOOKED AROUND THE BOARD, THERE YOU WERE.
GOD-LIKE AS KIYOTAKA WAS...
...AND ALL ALONE.

IF THIS WHOLE LAYOUT IS SO ORDERLY AND ECONOMICAL ...
...HOW COULD YOUR EXISTENCE HAVE NO REASON?
...IT IS UNWASTE-FUL...
...AND SYSTEM-ATICALLY ORGANIZED ...
...PERFECT LAYOUT...
SO HUMAN LIFE AND DEATH IS LIKE PART OF A DESIGN, HUH?
THAT'S DISGUSTING.
YEP ...
IT IS.
...BUT IF YOU'RE GOING TO CHALLENGE IT...
...THEN RUTH-KUN AND THE OTHERS HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO DIE.
!

ELEVEN YEARS AGO...
...EVEN AFTER KIYOTAKA POINTED OUT THE PROMISE IN YOU, NOT EVERYBODY BELIEVED HIM.
THERE WERE MANY WHO THOUGHT IT WAS ONLY A DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO BUY TIME.
BUT GIVEN THAT THERE WAS HOPE OF A RESOLUTION ...
...EVERYONE WAS WILLING TO PUT OFF MAKING THE DECISION OF TOTAL ANNIHILATION.
...EVEN IF IT WAS A FALSE HOPE...
...IT WAS ENOUGH TO KEEP US ALIVE.

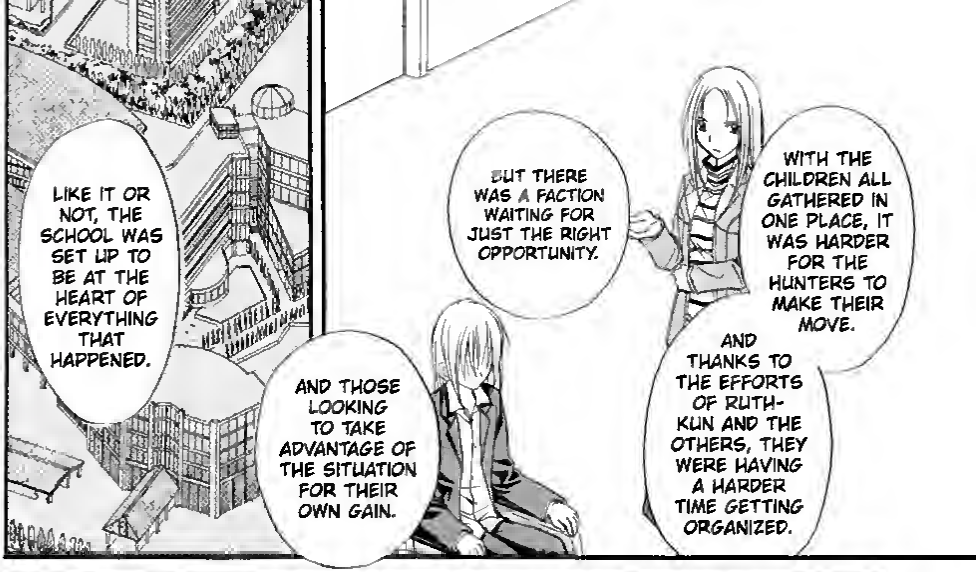
THERE WERE HUNTERS WHO WENT TO THE WATCHERS' SIDE...
...AND EVEN THE SAVERS' SIDE.
IMAZATO TOO WAS A RIGHT-WING EXTREMIST OF THE HUNTERS, BUT...
...HE PUT HIS BETS ON YOU AND CAME TO OUR SIDE...
...THOUGH HE'D KILLED SO MANY BLADE CHILREN BY THEN, RUTH-KUN AND THE OTHERS STILL DESPISED HIM.
...WHILE YOU SPENT YEARS WITH YOUR HEAD BOWED BEFORE KIYOTAKA...
...WE WERE ENGAGED IN BATTLE AFTER BATTLE WITH THE HUNTERS.
WE LOST COMRADES ...
...AND DIRTIED OUR HANDS TO SURVIVE.
IT WAS A BLOOD-BATH.

AMIDST UNENDING DESPAIR ...
...WE CLUNG TO YOUR EXISTENCE, TO THE HOPE THAT SEEMED TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE.
... FUNNY, ISN'T IT.

THE CHILDREN WHO WOULD WIPE OUT HUMANITY...
...THE BLADE CHILDREN...
UNDER THE CRUSHING FEAR OF NOT KNOWING WHEN YAIBA'S BLOOD WOULD SUDDENLY AWAKEN...
...RUTH-KUN AND THE OTHERS FOUGHT HARD TO GET WHERE THEY ARE.
...HAD TO KILL COUNTLESS PEOPLE JUST TO RESIST THAT DESTINY.
...WHAT WAS KIYOTAKA-SAN DOING IN THE MEAN-TIME?
KNOWING HIM, COULDN'T HE HAVE EASILY CRUSHED THE HUNTERS?
THAT MAN WORKED ACTIVELY TO NOT KILL THE PEOPLE ON THE HUNTERS' SIDE.

KIYOTAKA MIGHT HAVE VERY WELL BEEN ENJOYING THE SPECTACLE OF THE SITUATION.
...OR SO HE SAYS.
RATHER, HE CURBED THE HUNTERS' ACTIVITIES AND PROTECTED MANY BLADE CHILDREN.
...KIYOTAKA-SAN RAISED AYUMU...
...AND WORKED TO SAVE THE BLADE CHILDREN IN THE END, DIDN'T HE?
BUT...
...AND SACRIFICED SO FAR?
HOW MANY PEOPLE DO YOU THINK HE'S ALLOWED TO DIE...
...
...THAT'S RIGHT.

THAT'S THE PROBLEM.
AFTER KILLING YAIBA...
...AND CLEANING UP THE MESS BESIDES THE BLADE CHILDREN ...
...HE WAITED FOR AYUMU-KUN TO REACH THE RIGHT AGE AND THEN SET A PLAN IN MOTION LINKED TO THE SALVATION OF THE BLADE CHILDREN.
THAT'S WHY HE RESTRAINED THE HUNTERS ...
...RAISED AYUMU-KUN FROM A YOUNG AGE...
IN THE SCHOOL WHERE ALL THE BLADE CHILDREN WERE GATHERED ...
...YOU WAITED FOR YOUR BIG BROTHER AND PUZZLED OVER HIS FINAL, MYSTERIOUS MESSAGE.
ONCE THE HUNTERS GOT INVOLVED IN THEIR PURSUIT OF THE CHILDREN, SOMETHING WAS BOUND TO HAPPEN.
... PREPARED TSUKIOMI HIGH AND DISAP-PEARED.


LIKE IT OR NOT, THE SCHOOL WAS SET UP TO BE AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED.
AND THOSE LOOKING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION FOR THEIR OWN GAIN.
BUT THERE WAS A FACTION WAITING FOR JUST THE RIGHT OPPORTUNITY.
WITH THE CHILDREN ALL GATHERED IN ONE PLACE, IT WAS HARDER FOR THE HUNTERS TO MAKE THEIR MOVE.
AND THANKS TO THE EFFORTS OF RUTH-KUN AND THE OTHERS, THEY WERE HAVING A HARDER TIME GETTING ORGANIZED.

...AND OTHERS WHO USED TO BE AFFILIATED WITH THE KNIGHTS INTERFERED, SEE?
IN FACT, SONOBE AND ADACHI...

AND SINCE EVERYTHING THAT WAS HAPPENING AROUND YOU...
...WAS LINKED TO THE LAST WORDS HE LEFT YOU, HOW COULD YOU NOT INVOLVE YOURSELF?

...AFTER YOU ENTERED HIGH SCHOOL...
...KIYOTAKA LOOSENED HIS CHOKEHOLD ON THE HUNTERS.

MUCH LIKE A GOD OF SALVATION, DON'T YOU THINK?
.....
THOUGH YOU STILL DIDN'T HAVE A CLEAR GRASP ON THE SITUATION, ONCE SOMEONE WAS IN DANGER OF BEING KILLED...
...YOU GAVE IN TO YOUR TENDENCIES AND JOINED THE FIGHT AGAINST THE HUNTERS, SEE?
THOUGH AYUMU WAS BLESSED WITH MANY ABILITIES ...
...SO MUCH WAS ALSO STOLEN AWAY BY KIYOTAKA-SAN.
HE KNOWS MORE THAN ANYONE WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO BE DEPRIVED.
THAT'S WHY HE'D GET SO ADAMANT WHEN OTHERS WERE BEING DEPRIVED.
AFTER ALL, AYUMU KNOWS THE PAIN OF LOSS BETTER THAN ANYONE.

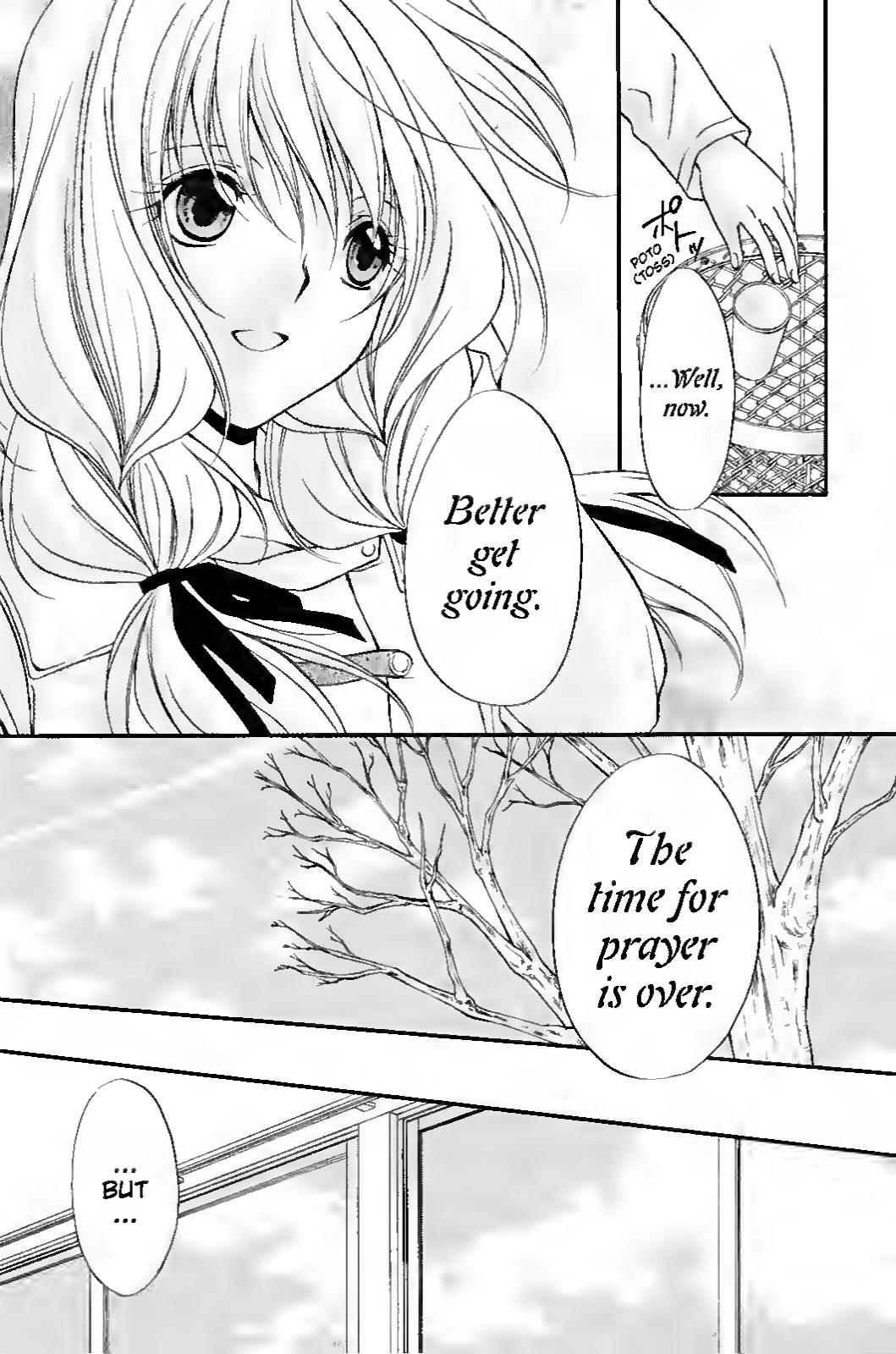
THROUGH WHAT HE LOST, HE BECAME A GOD OF SALVATION.
THAT'S THE WAY KIYOTAKA-SAN RAISED AYUMU!
THAT'S THE WHOLE PLAN AS IT WAS INITIALLY EXPLAINED...
SO EVEN IF AYUMU-KUN WAS A FALSE HOPE...
...IT GAVE KIYOTAKA A GOOD REASON TO PROTECT THE CHILDREN BEFORE THEY ENTERED HIGH SCHOOL...
...AND AMASSING THE KIDS IN ONE SCHOOL WAS MORE CONVENIENT FOR OBSERVATION AND SUPERVISION.
IF WORST CAME TO WORST, IT'D BE EASY TO KILL THEM ALL.
BOTH THE SAVERS AND WATCHERS AGREED TO IT.

BUT MY BROTHER SENT YOU GUYS TO KILL ME.
IF I HAD DIED, NOT ONLY WOULD EVERYTHING HAVE CRASHED TO A HALT...
...BUT HE'D TAKE IT OUT ON THE BLADE CHILDREN, RIGHT?
THAT WAS ONLY BECAUSE YOU WERE SO PATHETIC.
EVEN THOUGH YOU WERE SLIGHTLY ABOVE AVERAGE...
...YOU DIDN'T SEEM TO HOLD ANY REAL PROMISE.

KURURI (TURN) <3!
OH BOY... IT'S TRUE.
AYUMU-KUN, YOUR PATHETIC NATURE WAS BEYOND COMPARE.
THAT'S WHY THE WATCHERS AND SAVERS DESPAIRED THAT THE BLADE CHILDREN WOULD HAVE TO BE DESTROYED.
BI (POINT)
AND HEY, HOW COULD YOU, A PUBESCENT BOY, SPEND TWO YEARS LIVING ALONE WITH MADOKA-SAN, THE LOVE OF YOUR LIFE, WITHOUT MAKING A MOVE ON HER?
WELL.
IT WAS A DRASTIC MEASURE.
BOFU (POOMF)
AT LEAST PEEK IN ON HER IN THE BATH!
IF YOU'D ATTACKED WHEN SHE WAS WEAK, YOU'D HAVE HAD HER!
YOU GUTLESS YELLOW-BELLY!!
GURI
GURI (GRIND)

IF YOU'D FAILED TO FULFILL YOUR ROLE AND DIED PITIFULLY, I'D PROBABLY HAVE FELT BETTER.
POFU (TOSS)
FOR BETTER OF FOR WORSE, THEY CAME TO A CONCLUSION.
FOR RUTH-KUN AND THE OTHERS, THE TIME BEFORE THEIR DANGEROUS BLOOD AWAKENED WAS RUNNING OUT.
I ONLY FOUND IT EXASPER-ATING THAT OUR LIVES WERE IN THE HANDS OF THIS GOON.
I NEVER HELD ONTO HOPE FROM THE START.
...THIS IS HOW THINGS WORKED OUT.
AND THOUGH HE'S GOT HIS FLAWS...
BUT YOU MUST'VE HAD SOME EXPECTA-TIONS, DIDN'T YOU?

AFTER SO MUCH TIME AND SACRIFICE ...
...THE GOD OF SALVATION HAS AWOKEN.
SUKKU (RISE)


POTO (TOSS)
...Well, now.
Better get going.
The time for prayer is over.
...BUT...

WHAT EXACTLY CAN AYUMU DO TO SAVE THEM?
THIS PROBLEM LIES AT A GENETIC LEVEL, DOESN'T IT?
THE WATCHERS STUDIED YAIBA AND THE BLADE CHILDREN FOR YEARS, BUT...
...WE NEVER MANAGED TO DISCOVER THE SCIENTIFIC COMPONENTS THAT CONTROLLED THEIR SUPERIOR MINDS AND ABILITIES.
IT WOULD TAKE BIO-CHEMISTRY OR GENETIC ENGINEERING TO RESOLVE.
WHAT CAN HE POSSIBLY DO TO HELP?
ALL WE KNOW FOR CERTAIN IS THE DISTURBING REALITY THAT...
...IT IS SIMPLY A PROPERTY OF HIS BLOOD.
NOT SCIENCE OR CHEMISTRY ...
...BUT A PHENOMENON SIMILAR TO A CURSE.
... THAT'S WHY...

.....
...THERE'S A STRONG POSSIBILITY THAT A BOY...
...CAUSE AND EFFECT ...FATE ...
IF SUCH UNCONTROLLABLE THINGS WERE DESIGNED BY SOME TRANSCENDENTAL BEING, THEN...
...AYUMU REALLY IS THE KEY TO THIS WHOLE SCENARIO.
IT'S SOUNDS CRAZY, BUT...
...WHO WAS INVOLVED IN THE CAUSE AND EFFECT OF THAT BLOOD COULD OFFER UNFORESEEABLE HOPE.
...IF THAT'S THE CASE, IT WOULDN'T BE SO STRANGE TO THINK OF AYUMU AS A REDEEMER.
...THAT BEING SAID...
...THE MAJORITY OF THE AFFILIATED PARTIES SHARED THAT POINT OF VIEW.

...PART OF KIYOTAKA'S PLAN WAS TO OVERTURN THIS HOPE.
!?
BUT IN REALITY ...
.....
...I'LL BET.

OTHERWISE IT DOESN'T LINE UP WITH KANON HILBERT'S WILD RUN.
...IN OTHER WORDS ...
...ACCORDING TO HIS PLAN, I'M NOT MEANT TO PLAY THE ROLE OF SAVIOR OF THE BLADE CHILDREN.
BUT ...!

KIYOTAKA KNEW FROM THE START THAT THERE WAS NO SAVING THE BLADE CHILDREN.
HE WAS DELUDING EVERYONE FOR A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT REASON...
...BUYING TIME AND MAKING SACRIFICES ...
...TO ALLOW YOU TO GROW.
NOT EVEN RIO OR ASAZUKI KNOW THIS, BUT...
...THERE'S ONE MORE PAWN ON THIS CURSED BOARD...
...POSITIONED TO KEEP AYUMU NARUMI FROM BECOMING A SAVING GOD.
.....

...THERE'S AN OPPOSITE...
...FOR ME TOO, ISN'T THERE?
JUST AS MY BROTHER HAD YAIBA...
...I HAVE A "DEVIL" THAT I HAVE TO KILL, DON'T I?

...YAIBA ALSO HAS A LITTLE BROTHER.
A LITTLE BROTHER ALSO BORN WITH A MISSING RIB...
...WHO CAN'T BE KILLED BY HUMAN HANDS.
HE'S LIKE YAIBA AND YET NOT YAIBA...
...BUT HE STILL POSSESSES THE SAME DEMONIC STRENGTH.
IF ALLOWED TO LIVE, HE'LL SURELY BECOME A BLOOD-THIRSTY KILLER.
HE'S A DEVIL WHO WEARS THE SKIN OF A MAN, AND HE MUST BE KILLED.
THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN KILL HIM IS HIS COUNTER-PART: YOU.
THE SON OF GOD WHO STANDS OPPOSED TO HIZUMI AND HIS MISSING RIB.
ONLY YOU, AYUMU NARUMI.
THE DEVIL'S LITTLE BROTHER.
HIZUMI MIZUSHIRO.
...A SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD BOY, JUST LIKE YOU ...

...YAIBA ALSO HAS A LITTLE BROTHER.
A LITTLE BROTHER ALSO BORN WITH A MISSING RIB...
...WHO CAN'T BE KILLED BY HUMAN HANDS.
HE'S LIKE YAIBA AND YET NOT YAIBA...
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THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN KILL HIM IS HIS COUNTER-PART: YOU.
THE SON OF GOD WHO STANDS OPPOSED TO HIZUMI AND HIS MISSING RIB.
ONLY YOU, AYUMU NARUMI.

THE CREATORS ...
...ARE STARTING ANOTHER GAME, JUST LIKE YAIBA VS. KIYOTAKA.
YOU ...
...ARE HERE TO KILL HIZUMI.

YOU WON'T SAVE ANYBODY.
GLI CCLENCHÒ
...EVEN SO...

...I...

CHAPTER FIFTY-SIX
AS A NON-BELIEVER DESPITE IT ALL
CHIIIN (CHIING)
KA (CLACK)
GAA (WHARR)

CHAPTER FIFTY-SIX

AS A NON-BELIEVER DESPITE IT ALL

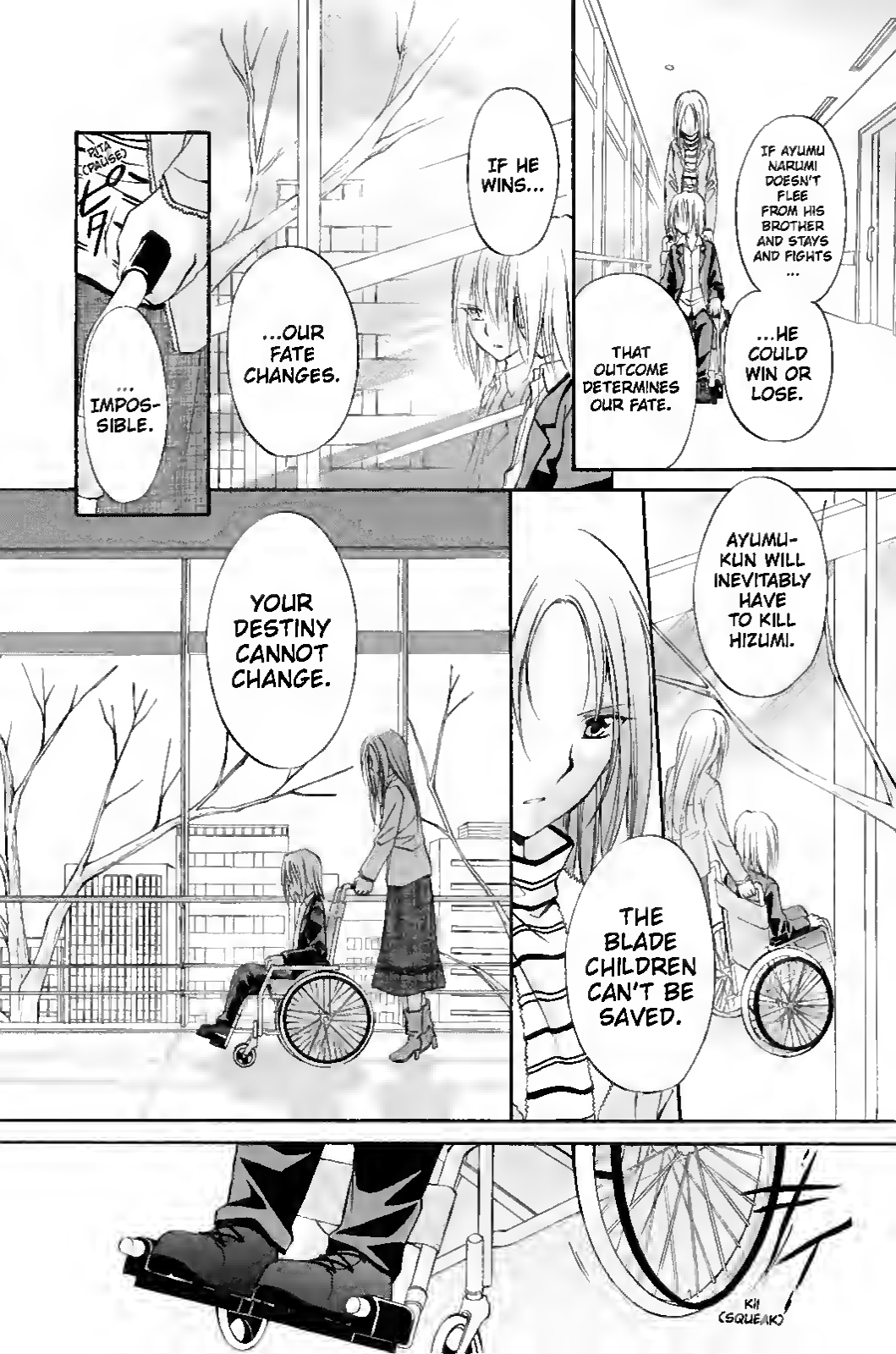
411
鳴海 歩
SIGN: AYUMU N. RUMI
.....
すよー
SUYOO (SNOOORE)
ぴぎゃ
HICKA
ス:
SU (LIFT)
ネジ!!
NEJI!! (PROD)

UUUH ...
YOU COULD'VE WOKEN ME UP A LITTLE GENTLER.
OKAY, NARUMI-SAN?
SORRY.
DOSA (THUD)
I'M JUST REALLY PEEVED.
SO YOUR TALK WITH RUTHERFORD-SAN AND THE OTHER GIRL ...
...IS ALL DONE, I TAKE IT.
YEAH.
GI (CREAK)
...YOU WANNA KNOW HOW IT WENT?

...I GUESS THERE'S NO REASON WHY YOU WOULDN'T, HUH?
I MEAN ...
YES!
I REALLY REALLY WANNA KNOW!!
HOLD ON.
I'M NOT EVEN INVOLVED IN THIS.
SO TO SAY I WANT IN IS SUPER-NOSY OF ME.
AH...
...THEN AGAIN ...
...IF YOU'LL BE NEEDING MY HELP IN THE FUTURE, THEN PLEASE TELL ME.

WITHOUT ANY INFORMATION, I CAN'T BE MUCH HELP, NOW CAN I?
ISN'T IT UNFAIR TO PUT IT THAT WAY?
.....
...WELL...
LONG LONG AGO...
OH MY.
IS IT REALLY?
...I SWEAR, YOU'RE THE ONE PERSON...
...I DON'T WANT AS FRIEND OR FOE.

...THERE WERE THESE CREATORS.
HUH?
...THE CROSSROADS OF FATE, HUH...?
THEY SAY THAT IF AYUMU-KUN IS GOING TO CHANGE FATE AT ALL, HE MUST REACH THIS PARTICULAR POINT, I THINK IT WAS?
...IT'S A PHRASE THE SAVERS USE A LOT.


IF AYUMU NARUMI DOESN'T FLEE FROM HIS BROTHER AND STAYS AND FIGHTS ...
...HE COULD WIN OR LOSE.
THAT OUTCOME DETERMINES OUR FATE.
IF HE WINS...
...OUR FATE CHANGES.
PETA (PAUSE)
...IMPOS-SIBLE.
AYUMU-KUN WILL INEVITABLY HAVE TO KILL HIZUMI.
THE BLADE CHILDREN CAN'T BE SAVED.
YOUR DESTINY CANNOT CHANGE.
KII (SQUEAK)

...BUT HE'S FINALLY READY AND WILLING TO FACE KIYOTAKA HEAD-ON.
NOTHING'S FOR CERTAIN AT THIS POINT.
NOTH-ING...
...AT ALL...
SO YOU'RE A GOD WHO'S GOING TO KILL THIS HIZUMI PERSON, NARUMI-SAN!?
CHARIN (CLINK)
SO GOES THE PLAN.

THAT'S WHY MY BROTHER TRIED TO SET ME UP SO I'D BE FORCED TO TAKE OUT HIZUMI.
AND THE WAY THEY FIGURE IT, I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN KILL HIZUMI.
IF HIZUMI'S ALLOWED TO LIVE, HE'LL BECOME THE SAME DEMON YAIBA WAS...
...AN ABSOLUTE BUTCHER.
BY HAVING ME DO BATTLE WITH THE BLADE CHILDREN...
...AND KILL KANON HILBERT.
...IF I HADN'T FOUGHT THE BLADE CHILDREN, I WOULDN'T HAVE THE CONFIDENCE TO FACE WHAT WAS TO COME.

IF I'D KILLED KANON HILBERT ...
...I'D FEEL OBLIGATED TO KILL HIZUMI SO HIS SACRIFICE WOULDN'T BE IN VAIN.
ONCE I'D DIRTIED MY HANDS, THERE'D BE NO GOING BACK.
IT WOULDN'T EVEN BE ABOUT SAVING ANYBODY ANYMORE.
... THEN ...
...YOUR BIG BROTHER'S PLAN FAILED, RIGHT?
NO.
RIGHT AFTER I STOPPED KANON HILBERT ...
...KIRIE TSUCHIYA RECEIVED A CALL FROM MY BROTHER.
HE SAID THAT THE GAME IS STILL ON, AND THAT THOSE WHO MUST BE KILLED WILL BE KILLED, AND THOSE WHO MUST KILL WILL KILL.
NOBODY CAN ESCAPE.
... THAT'S WHAT HE SAID.

MY BROTHER'S DECEIVED EVERYBODY TO MAKE THINGS GO JUST HOW HE WANTS.
KO (CLACK)
I DON'T DOUBT THAT EVEN AS WE SPEAK, HE'S POSITIONING HIS PAWNS SO I HAVE TO TAKE ON HIZUMI.
...EITHER THAT, OR...
.....
AFTER THAT, HE AND HIZUMI COMPLETELY VANISHED TOGETHER.
...MY BROTHER HAS...
...A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT GOAL IN MIND.

UMM ...
CAN'T YOUR BIG BROTHER DEFEAT HIZUMI?
I'M STILL NOTHING MORE THAN A PAWN UNDER MY BROTHER'S CONTROL.
ONE THING'S FOR SURE.
NOBODY'S BEEN ABLE TO KILL HIZUMI.
AND MY BROTHER IS ONLY A MATCH FOR YAIBA.
HE COULDN'T EVEN TOUCH HIZUMI.
THEY SAID THAT WAS IMPOSSIBLE.
THEN YOU'D BE FREE, NARUMI-SAN, AND—
...IT SEEMS ONLY NATURAL HE COULD DO THE SAME TO HIS LITTLE BROTHER, RIGHT?
HE DEFEATED HIZUMI'S OLDER BROTHER YAIBA, SO...

THE WAY THEY SEE IT, ONLY I, AS HIS COUNTER-PART, CAN KILL HIZUMI.
RUTHERFORD SAID THAT THE FIRST TIME THEY MET, HE WAS COMPLETELY OVERWHELMED.
HIZUMI APPARENTLY GIVES OFF THIS AIR OF BEING AN ABSOLUTE BEING.
... HIZUMI MIZU-SHIRO ...
SOUNDS LIKE ANOTHER HANDFUL.
.....
HE'S NOTHING LIKE YOU, THE GUY WHO ONLY GOT HIS ACT TOGETHER AFTER A LOT OF PAINFUL POKING AND PRODDING.
MU CHIMPED
FOR YOUR INFOR-MATION ...
...I'VE HAD TO DEAL WITH MY OLDER BROTHER MY WHOLE LIFE...
...AND I GREW UP FEELING LIKE I WAS CARRYING A HUGE WEIGHT ON MY BACK.

BUT HIZUMI LOST HIS BROTHER EARLY ON.
HIS BROTHER WHO WAS SO LIKE HIM...
...AND WHO WOULD HAVE STOLEN EVERYTHING FROM HIM.
I LOST EVERY-THING WHILE HE LOST NOTHING ...
OF COURSE THERE'S A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US.
THAT'S WHY IN ORDER TO FACE HIZUMI...
...I HAD TO FIGHT...
...TO BE ABLE TO RAISE MY HEAD HIGH.
...THAT'S WHY I NEEDED THE BLADE CHILDREN.

THE BLADE CHILDREN WHO POSSESS SUPERIOR ABILITY AND FEROCITY...
IT'S AS IF THEY WERE ONLY CREATED FOR THIS PURPOSE.
THAT ALSO ...
... DISTURBS ME.
THE PERFECT THROW-AWAY PAWNS FOR DRILLING A GOD ON HOW TO KILL THE DEVIL.
HIS BOARD DOESN'T HAVE ANY WASTED PAWNS ON IT.

...SO... WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
I MEAN ...
...WHAT CAN YOU POSSIBLY DO ABOUT THIS FATE?
...LIKE RUTHER-FORD SAID...
...I'VE LEFT MYSELF OPEN FOR OPTIONS.
SIGN: AYUMU NARUMI
OPEN?
...I STILL HAVEN'T KILLED ANYBODY ...
...SO NOTHING IS SET IN STONE JUST YET.
THAT'S WHY I INTEND TO DEFY FATE...
...AND WAIT FOR THE CHANCE TO BECOME WHATEVER I CHOOSE TO BE.

I STILL HAVE OPTIONS.
SO THERE'S STILL A CHANCE THAT WHEN IT COMES TO HIZUMI AND THE BLADE CHILDREN...
...I CAN BECOME SOMEONE WHO CAN RESOLVE THEIR PROBLEMS.
...EVEN IF THE ODDS ARE AS GOOD AS ZERO...
...HE'S BETTING IT ALL ON ME.
...WELL...
GACHA (CLACK)
SIGN: AYUMU NARUMI
KII (CREAK)
...EVEN IF THE SITUATION'S DISMAL, YOU'RE GOING TO FIGHT FOR THAT POSSIBILITY, RIGHT?

BELIEVE IN YOUR STRENGTH.
I DON'T BELIEVE IN ANYTHING.
...NOT THAT AGAIN ...
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT.
ISN'T IT MORE NATURAL TO BELIEVE THAT NONE OF THIS IS TRUE...
...AND THAT ALL THIS WORRY OVER THE BLADE CHILDREN'S FUTURE IS FOR NOTHING?
...I SUPPOSE, BUT—
DOSA (THUD)
AFTER ALL.
HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO BELIEVE ALL THIS TALK ABOUT CREATORS AND CURSES AND ME BEING A GOD?
IT GOES AGAINST EVERYTHING COMMON SENSE TELLS ME, SEE?

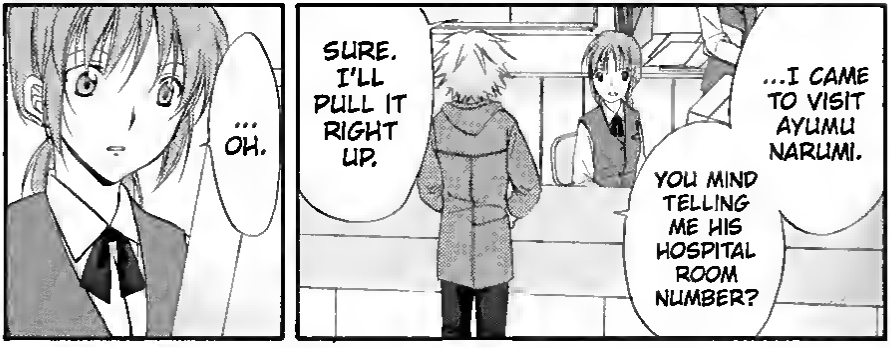
BOSU (FWUMP)
...STILL.
AS THINGS STAND NOW, THE BLADE CHILDREN WILL ALL BE KILLED.
THERE ARE PLENTY OF PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE IN THE CURSE.
SO IF BLOOD'S BEEN SPILLED OVER THIS, COMMON SENSE DOESN'T EVEN ENTER THE EQUATION.
HIZUMI WILL TRIGGER THE SLAUGHTER.
TOO MANY PEOPLE WERE SACRIFICED ...
...TO CALL IT ALL A LIE NOW.
RIGHT OR WRONG, THEIR BELIEF IS TOO STRONG TO TAKE BACK NOW.

I DON'T BELIEVE IN ANYTHING.
NOT IN THERE BEING CREATORS.
NOT IN MY ABILITY TO SAVE ANYBODY.
BUT AT THE SAME TIME...
...I DON'T BELIEVE THERE ARE NO CREATORS.
OR THAT I CAN'T SAVE ANYBODY.
I DON'T EVEN BELIEVE IN DESPAIR.
! GU (CLENCH)

THAT'S WHAT'S BROUGHT ME FACE-TO-FACE WITH THIS REALITY.
NO MATTER HOW I'M PLAGUED BY BETRAYAL, DECEIT, AND DARKNESS...
...I'M NOT GIVING UP.
JUST THAT YOU'RE STILL THE NARUMI-SAN I KNOW, NARUMI-SAN.
NOTH-ING.
ABOUT WHAT?
MUKU (GRIP)
BOSH (PLUMP)
...THAT PUTS MY HEART AT EASE.

SORRY.
FOR BEING AS LAME AS EVER.
BUT...
...BEING NARUMI-SAN MAKES YOU MORE DEPENDABLE.
IT'S TRUE, OKAY?
.....
GU (GULP)
SU (SWISH)
...WHAT'S MY BROTHER PLANNING NEXT..?

...AND HIZUMI MIZU-SHIRO...
...WHAT MOVE WILL HE MAKE...?
宮下総合病院
SIGN: MIYASHITA GENERAL HOSPITAL
HEY...


...OH.
SURE. I'LL PULL IT RIGHT UP.
...I CAME TO VISIT AYUMU NARUMI.
YOU MIND TELLING ME HIS HOSPITAL ROOM NUMBER?

I'M SORRY, BUT...
...HE'S NOT ALLOWED VISITORS WITHOUT EXPRESS PERMISSION ...
GEEZ LOUISE ...
HMM ...
GUESS KIRIE-CHAN'S GOT HER EYE ON HIM...
...HOW ABOUT THIS, THEN?
WOULD YOU CHECK INTO GETTING ME THIS "EXPRESS PERMISSION"?
...MY NAME'S ...

Spiral 11 THE BONDS OF REASONING THE END

Spiral
THE BONDS OF REASONING

NEXT SPIRAL
PREVIEW
THE TWO BOYS APPOINTED BY GOD AND THE DEVIL FINALLY MEET...!!
ZA (WHOOSH)
...THEN WHAT SONG...
...HI-ZUMI?
...WILL YOU SING AS THE DEVIL...
HEY THERE.
AYUMU
YOU FIND THE SONG YOU WANT TO SING AS GOD?

HE'S WHAT MY FATE IS ALL ABOUT.
EVEN IF THIS TURNS INTO A BLOOD-BATH ...
...I CAN'T RUN AWAY.
LIGHT AND SHADOW CAN'T EXIST WITHOUT THEIR COUNTERPARTS... AYUMU FINALLY RESOLVES TO FACE THE DESTINY GIVEN HIM.
IF I DIED NOW ...
A NEW SEGMENT, THE "HIZUMI ARC" BEGINS!!
HIZUMI SUDDENLY SHOWS UP! BUT WHAT IS HIS PURPOSE ...!?
YOU'RE EASIER TO KILL THAN I THOUGHT, YOU KNOW?
...IT'D PROBABLY BECOME HOPE FOR EVERY-ONE.

TO BE CONTINUED IN VOLUME 12 OF "SPIRAL: THE BONDS OF REASONING"

To be continued. Please wait !

UH, THAT TYPO CAN'T BE FOR REAL...
NIUMU ARUMI.
YOU, WHO WERE ONLY FIVE YEARS OLD AT THE TIME.
Spiral Work Diary
-THE TYPO-FILLED VOLUME-
WILL YOU TAKE THIS DANCE?
"THE ONLY ONE FOR ME IS..."
...WAS SUPPOSED TO BE THERE.
EVEN THE BONUS MANGA OF VOLUME 10 HAD SOME TYPESETTING MISSING.
HERE
*I BELIEVE THAT ERROR WAS CORRECTED IN THE SECOND PRINTING.
ANYBODY WHO'S EVER WRITTEN A MANGA MAKES TYPOS AND MISPRINTS AT SOME POINT...

AND SO...

HA HA HA...
YOU MISSPELLED "STEAL" TO BE "STEEL."
THIS WORD DOESN'T EVEN MEAN ANYTHING.
BUT TO BE HONEST, THERE ARE TONS OF TYPOS WHEN I'M AT THE ROUGHS STAGE.
...SOME ERRORS ARE MINE, AND SOME ARE MY EDITORS' DEPENDING ON THE SITUATION.
AS FOR THE TYPOS THIS TIME...

ARE YOU TRYING OUT FOR BASEBALL, IMAZATO-SENSEI...?
LEAVE THE DEFENSE TO ME!
WITH MY EDITORS' HELP, THE MISTAKES ARE FIXED IN TIME FOR THE RUN IN THE MAGAZINE, BUT...
RECENTLY...
...GOT ACCIDENTALLY WRITTEN.
THERE WERE HUNTERS WHO WENT TO THE WATCHERS' SIDE...
...AND EVEN THE SAVORS SIDE.
...I MUST HAVE WORN MYSELF OUT BECAUSE...
MY HAND HURTS...
GAARI (SKRITCH)
GAARI
SINCE THIS LATEST VOLUME HAD SO MANY PAGES OF ROUGHS TO DO...

BEING THE LITTLE BROTHER OF KIYOTAKA HAREM!
...THERE WAS A WHOLE LOT OF THIS GOING ON:
GOOD THING THAT DIDN'T GET KEPT IN THERE (NOT LIKE IT EVER COULD).
..."HAREM"?

WELL, I'LL SEE YOU AGAIN IN THE NEXT VOLUME!

I'M GOING TO BE CAREFUL (TO THE BEST OF MY ABILITY) WHEN IT COMES TO TYPOS IN THE FUTURE.

AFTERWORD

Here we are, Volume 11 at last. Hello there, this is Kyo Shirodaira. Our story is in its final stretch.

When the chapter of this volume that clarifies all the mysteries was originally released in the magazine, the comments came flooding in. Most readers complained that it was too impractical and fantastic an explanation.

I admit my own inability to construct the explanation persuasively, and I was lacking in the presentation aspect too, but essentially the complaints do have a point. After all, we're dealing with divine creators, gods, and demons. Of course it's going to make you knit your brows in consternation.

Truth be told, before the story was serialized, the "ultimate truth" I had in mind was grounded in reality. It would take a long time to tell you why I ended up not going the non-supernatural route, and I'd have to explain some rather unamusing behind-the-scenes circumstances that dictated it, but if I had to give at least one reason, it would be because a "practical truth" can be resolved by practical thinking, practical methods, and practiacl procedures.

Sure, that would make everything neater and tidier, but if asked how necessary Ayumu Narumi's involvement would be in that scenario, the answer would be, "Nah, Ayumu doesn't even have to be there."

Ayumu is going to confront a kind of "fantasy" that revolves around Yaiba Mizushiro, Kiyotaka Narumi, and Hizumi Mizushiro, as well as the people who believe in that unsettling fantasy. Not only is fantasy impractical, but realistic reasoning methods don't stand a chance against it. So no matter how much you rant that "Hey! That's not realistic!" it can be

immediately trumped by someone saying "Well, that's the truth!" If one world operates on these "fantastic rules," any standards you try to bring in from some other world won't be effective. And if you try to fight with a different set of rules that don't apply to the situation you're in, "common sense" and "reality" are inevitably going to fail.

Ayumu must do battle in this type of difficult situation. His only weapons are his wit, courage, and reasoning. So how is a boy who doesn't possess a single fantastic ability (or at least he doesn't want to) win in an unrealistic but still watertight fantasy? How can he solve the problems wrought by that very same fantasy? So do you see how this battle has to be fought by a boy who shrugs his shoulders and says, "I don't believe in anything"? I'd appreciate it if you could give it a chance in the next volume. Remember that under a different name, this fantasy becomes a real problem that real life society is often faced with.....

Even so, I feel quite acutely how badly I need to work on my powers of persuasion and presentation. Otherwise, I wouldn't have to go into a lengthy explanation like this. Things don't always go the way we want.

Lastly, the bonus novel story that was being serialized on GANGAN NET for so long alongside the sales of the comic volumes wrapped up at volume four of the printed version. At this time, there is no plan for any new serializations, but when the next volume of the comic comes, GANGAN NET is planning some kind of bonus for it. It will be something to look forward to, so keep your eyes peeled.

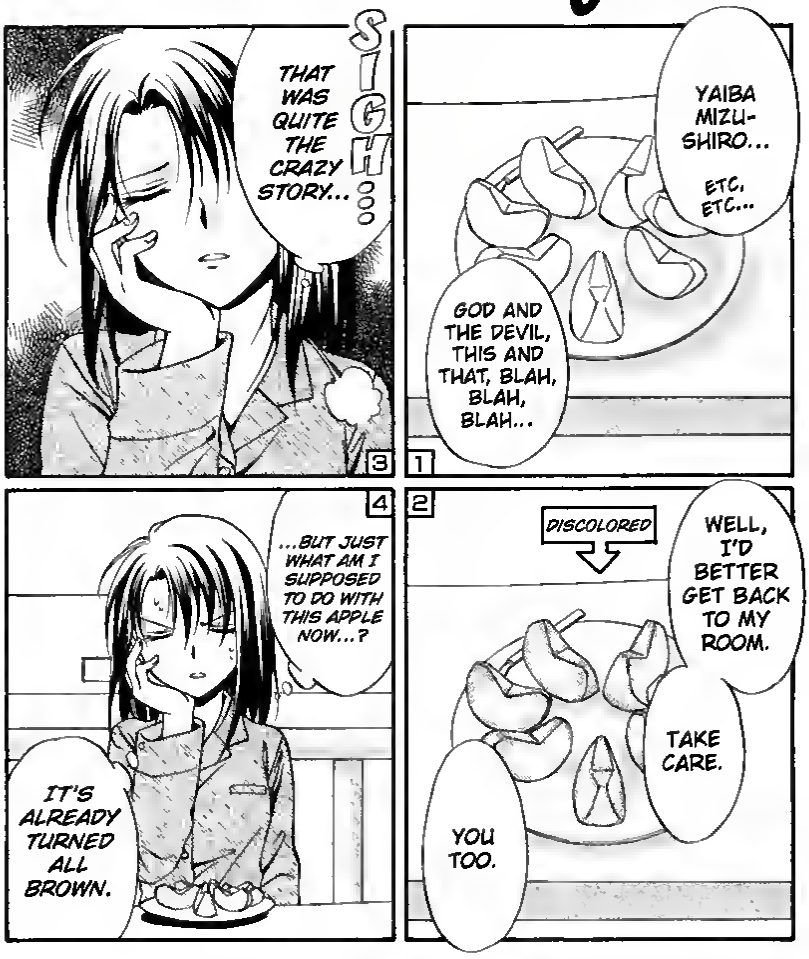
And with that, I'll be praying to see you again in Volume 12.

坂平京

KYO SHIRODAIRA

Spiral
THE BONDS OF REASONING 11

Omake!



TRANSLATION NOTES

Page 56
Asayo Newspaper is a parody of a real newspaper in Japan called, "Asahi." "Asa" means "morning" and the symbols for both "yo" and "hi" mean "sun."

SPIRAL
The Bonds of Reasoning ⑪

Kyo Shirodaira
Eita Mizuno

Translation: Christine Dashiell

Lettering: Alexis Eckerman

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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